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THE MAN FROM ROME AND OTHER STORIES



THE MAN FROM ROME

AND OTHER STORIES

BY

MARIE VAN VORST

AUTHOR OF 'THE SENTIMENTAL ADVENTURES OF JIMMY BULSTRODE,' ETC.

LONDON
EVELEIGH NASH
FAWSIDE HOUSE
1908





TO FRANCES CATLIN IN HAPPY MEMORY OF DAYS AT FAIRHOLME

Paris, September 1908.

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19/4/29.

THE MAN FROM ROME

I

THEY came slowly down the gangplank together, father, mother, daughter, and big sulky son.

Once on the pier they were assailed by the voices of the Old World, new in tone and phrase to their Western ears. From among the crowd a tall young man pushed himself forward and addressed Mr. Porson.

'A courier, sir; want a courier?'

Mr. Porson, whose blue eyes were looking for the first time on Europe, took in the figure of the speaker indulgently and rather humorously, as was his way of taking the world.

'A courier?' he said, 'to do what?'

And the man was quick to exclaim:

'To show you Naples, Pompeii, Capri—all, all!' Mr. Porson smiled.

'That's rather a large order, isn't it?' he said, and the young man who smiled, showing two rows of beautiful teeth, gave evidence that he did not quite understand.

'I have introductions,' said the courier, putting his hand towards his breast-pocket. 'I am well known. If the *signore* would try me.'

The girl at her father's side was the most charming type of the young American woman, neither too tall nor too short, with a pretty graceful figure hid

by the long lines of her travelling coat. Her face, lifted at the moment as her father spoke to the strange young man, was full of a bright interest, full of an inquiry, and the man, looking from the American gentleman upon whose decision he would, perhaps, depend for his daily bread, found his eyes attracted to the daughter of a future patron. It was impossible for him to help exclaiming mentally:

'Dio, what a beautiful face! Dio, what a ravishing little face! Is it possible that anything so fine and exquisite has come from a country that people call barbarous, savage, and is known also as "the rough West"?'

Meanwhile the other members of the party had gone on towards the lines of cabs and omnibuses. The American traveller for a moment appeared to to be seriously thinking of the courier who presented himself. He looked at his wife, as was his habit, a little questioningly, and the expression of great fatigue on her face made him, for the moment, forget everything but Mrs. Porson. Whatever the gentleman replied to the insistence of the handsome Italian was so short and so succinct that the wife and daughter did not hear his decision.

Mrs. Porson had a thin, pinched face, much wrinkled; she lifted it reproachfully to her husband.

'Why, Ellie, you don't know one thing about that man.'

'Now, come along, Mother.' The Lumber King put his great hand under his wife's arm. 'You need a steady bed that won't tip you out every time you move. That's what you want, and so does Cissy.'

They followed the porter to the omnibus where Mrs. Porson's maid was already installed.

'What I want,' said the boy, whose voice was in disproportion to his years, 'is a good steak and some griddle cakes, but I bet I'll never see anything like that till I get back home.'

The girl wrinkled her fair brows.

'Oh, Bird,' she said, 'you never think about anything but meals.'

The older woman, on whose dull cheeks life had written the history, neither of great sorrow nor great joy, leaned back in the omnibus, her eyes closed, the discomforts of an ocean voyage still harrowing her. Mr. Porson, looking across at his wife, remembered with a tinge of remorse how she had assured him before she left America, 'It won't make any difference in my headaches, Elias, whether I'm in Rome or La Crosse,' and so far nothing had made any difference! Then the Lumber King's eyes travelled to the other face. Cissy had vivified.

The omnibus was crawling up a long, narrow street, where, fluttering from windows and doorways, red and yellow banners, floating high and brilliant, made a waving vista. Queer little cabs, their horses gay with bells, dashed like mad through the crowd. Cissy saw through the window that the courier had taken his place beside the coachman.

'Father,' she touched his knee, 'that man who spoke to you is riding up with us.'

Mr. Porson, who was enchanted to have discovered a cigar that he didn't know he possessed, had lit it, and was smoking cheerfully. His hands in his pockets, he beamed on his family.

'Oh, that man's all right. He's bound to get a job. You mustn't think that we've got all the push there is in the West. They tell me Eyetalians are

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very pushing. I guess I'll have to try that man a day or so. We'll all go round with him to-morrow and let Mother rest.'

But here Mrs. Porson came sufficiently out of her lethargy to remark that the guide-book said 'Naples is a great place for corals and cameos and tortoiseshell combs.'

'I guess I could get out for an hour or so with you, Ellie, in the afternoon.'

Mr. Porson shook his indulgent head, still smiling. 'No stores in *mine*, Mother; you can buy all the corals you want, but you'll have to do it yourself. Cissy and I are going to see the town.'

They saw the town that day and the next, and for many following days, Mrs. Porson having succumbed to some vague malady for which, in her husband's mind, the sea-voyage, the un-American hotel, the corals and cameo stores were all mingled in their responsibility. She had, as she put it, 'given out,' and with a finality that suggested that 'she had only kept up for years' under protest. Mr. Porson's other children had died early, and Bird might sulk as deeply as he liked, no one ever reproached him. His pockets were full of money, and as for Cissy—well, Mr. Porson had said, 'If there's anything going, that she wants, and I can buy it, it belongs to the girl!'

It was an immense pleasure and fascination to the busy man to find himself for hours, to whose charm there was no forced end but twilight, alone with his daughter, in the environment of a new world. He 'hadn't learned anything,' so he said, 'since he left school, and he was learning now.' With Cissy on one side of him and Francesco on the other, a cigar between his lips, the broad flaps of his collar flung

well back from his great muscular neck, his face aglow with content, Elias Porson 'did Naples.'

Bird, like his mother, had given out at an early moment. He had discovered a boatman who, having sulks of his own, understood Bird's, and in his skiff with Piero della Pesca the boy spent his days fishing and lolling on the bay.

The Italian city was explained and described to Miss Porson by the Italian voice of the courier until after a few days she floated through sight-seeing indifferent to fatigue.

As she sat on the balcony of her hotel after dinner nothing stood clearly out from the mass of things she had seen to claim major importance. Naples modern and Naples of the past jumbled in pleasant and agreeable confusion in the little American's mind. And it all became a background, a setting for the graceful figure of Francesco. When she tried to recall the day she was extremely irritated to find that she could see nothing but him before her eyes. When she wanted to write in her 'My Trip Abroad' book, or home to her girl friends, Francesco appeared before her.

'Why, he's nothing but a courier,' she said to herself, but the scornful classification did not always avail to clear her mind of the beautiful man.

There were many, many things the vague apprehension of which had never crossed Cissy Porson's life except when possibly the page of some book or a photograph may have stirred the wings of her imagination. All the imagination she had was now on the flight.

Mr. Porson, after vaguely wondering to just what

class his courier belonged, trying to place the distinguished young man, whose manner and dress were those of a prince, in the category of valets and chauffeurs and servants, finally accepted him as a sort of professor, and decided from the first that he must eat with them.

The three found themselves in a tiny glass-covered restaurant overhanging Posilippo. To reach it they had been rolled up in a funicular. The tables round them were vacant. The aged, shuffling cameriere served for them alone. The inevitable orchestra sang for them alone.

Francesco consulted Mr. Porson. Would the signore have a native dish of macaroni—a risotto or a pollo rostito? And it was in perfect accordance with her type of wonderful quickness, amazing cleverness, Yankee adaptiveness, that Cissy knew what he meant!

She had been three days a Neapolitan; her eyes, her mind, her senses were alert. She nodded at the macaroni and the *pollo rostito*.

'And just get a bottle of that Cape Rye'—Mr. Porson pronounced the wine of Capri as though it were a kind of whisky—'that dry yellow wine, will you, Francesco? It's good enough for me!' commanded his patron.

The day had carried them for a long excursion down the bay, and, as Mr. Porson wished to 'do a little out-of-door eating,' the courier had fetched them up here, where, if not quite al fresco, at least only a pane or two of glass was between them and the day.

Elias Porson half shut his eyes. It was a fine sight. 'I take the Bay of Naples,' he had written

home to his partner, 'to be as handsome a view as I 've ever seen.'

The succulent novelty of macaroni was also before him. He put his napkin into his buttonhole and gave himself up to the difficult task of eating the dish before him. The yellow Capri filled his glass like gold. He was not a materialist nor an animal man, but he liked life—his way of it. Porson bit off the end of his cigar, lit it, and leaned back. There was about the warm day—summerlike indeed compared to his American winter weather—a magic that diffused itself through him. He thought of his early love-making, and the face that came to him with startling distinctness was not his wife's face. Through the smoke of his cigar he meditatively watched his courier Francesco and the girl.

Cissy had eaten little of the carefully commanded breakfast; she frankly couldn't manage the macaroni and had femininely picked at the rest, sipping the fragrant wine. Whether or not there was anything in reality in the nature of the little, uncultured creature capable of appreciating what her blue eyes saw, is not the question. She leaned on the table. Her short sleeves stopped at her elbow; her round forearm was bare; her hair fell in bright disorder about her pretty, mobile face. She sighed.

'It's a lovely day,' she mused; 'I'm having a lovely time. I guess Bird's out there in one of those boats with his friend. I hope he won't get drowned.'

It was the American voice with little modulation or inflexion, but very sweet.

Her father meditatively continued to look at her, but she was as unconscious of him as she was of the other man's attention. Francesco at his end of the table sat indolently in his chair. One long, slight hand, on which he wore a ring with a dark red stone, was outspread on the cloth. His dress was sober and discreet, save that he wore a red tie in place of the conventional cravat. This gave him rather a Bohemian air. His soft hat lay by his side on the floor with a pair of gloves in its crown, and by it a Baedeker and a little notebook of crushed leather. His eyes rested upon Miss Porson as if they would absorb her, draw her in, devouringly, as if she were some kind of light he craved or some liquid his parched senses demanded.

The musicians were of the humblest order, riff-raff of singers that thronged the hotels during the season, or who even go out in little boats to sing to ships on the bay. Their instruments were badly out of tune, and they assailed the ears with 'Santa Lucia' and 'Bella Napoli,' but this time they really appealed, for the Westerner had never heard these songs before. Finally the leader came out into the room and stood singing alone. The song was so sweet, the man's voice was so liquid, that even Porson turned about his chair and listened. Francesco leaned a little over to Cissy.

'He is singing to you, Signorina,' he smiled.

'But I don't understand a word he says,' Cissy disclaimed.

The squeaking instruments struggled with the melody, nearly caught up with it, took a plunge at it, and, either too infirm or too indifferent, finally let it go free, and then, with a graceful gesture of his hand, as if he wafted every note to Cissy, the singer brought his cantata to an end.

Mr. Porson got a gold piece from his pocket.

'Here, Francesco,' he bade his courier, 'give them this; it's the price of an opera seat, and I've sat through more than one opera and not been half so well pleased.'

That evening when Francesco came to take his orders for the following morning Miss Porson stood alone on the balcony of the hotel. Over her evening dress Cissy had thrown a shawl with long fringe. Mr. Porson had given it to his wife years ago when ladies wore shawls, and Cissy had captured it, for she liked queer, old-fashioned things.

'Francesco,' she said to the man, 'tell me what the words of the song were the man sang to-day.'

The man hesitated.

'The Signorina can buy it,' he said.

She nodded impatiently.

'Oh, I suppose so, but don't you know what the words mean?'

'Yes,' he said, 'but in English they will not sound the same.'

'Never mind,' she urged imperiously, 'tell me in some way or other. I want to know what the words mean.'

'There was a rose: I picked it last night.
Would you know where it lies? On her heart.
There's a bird: I captured him, then set him free.
Would you know where he has flown? To her window.
Would you know where my heart would rest? On hers.
Would you know where I would climb? To her window.
She has taken home the rose and the bird.
Will she take me home too?'

She listened. Never having heard words like these before, or said like this, she was in her simple way a little confused and hardly knew what to say. It was as if she heard the music over again, only far more delightfully, far more comprehensively, and she had the advantage this time of understanding what it meant. If the musician had sung the song to her, certainly she had the feeling that Francesco said the words to her, although his eyes were fixed on the town as it was seen below the hotel, in the horseshoe of the valley. She said nothing when he had finished, but after a few seconds she asked:

- 'And the name of the little restaurant? What did that mean?'
- 'I Promessi Sposi. It means,' Francesco told her, 'the Promised Ones, the Affianced.'

She wrinkled her brows.

'Oh, the *Engaged* Couple,' she amended. 'Well, I think it is prettier in Italian, and I guess I won't ever go there again unless I'm engaged.'

Francesco said nothing more. Indeed, his manner to her was perfect. He treated the nonchalant little American in a way that awed her, unused as she was to any kind of form or manner. In a few moments she prettily bid him 'Good-night, Francesco.'

'Good-night, Signorina.'

Bird ran no great risk of drowning in the Bay of Naples. The boatman whose friendship he had made quite by himself was a magnificent creature who took good care of his advantageous little patron. Piero had the head of a Greek god, the muscles of a Titan, and the voice of a dove.

Birden was a sportsman born. He had eyes and ears for nothing but the woods and their creatures, and water only existed that he might catch fish from it. He caught many fish with Piero. For hours they would sit patiently watching for frutta del Mare,

the fruit of the sea, as the language charmingly has Meanwhile he learned sufficient Italian to understand his companion, to make himself crudely understood. He learned that his friend was from Capri, was the father of ten children, and the brother of four sisters, of whom all were beautiful, bellissima and splendida and virtuous save one; and Piero never got far in his description of this one, for at some stated point towards the end of the story he would rise in the boat and, with uplifted hand, pour forth a roulade of words under his breath in his melting voice. It sounded very much like the roucoulement of pigeons under the eaves, a guttural rumble. It might have been an appeal or an ecstasy, and how was Birden Porson, of La Crosse, Wisconsin, to know that it was a curse?

Piero's hands shook towards the North always and, indeed, it shook in that direction so often that one day Bird asked him:

'What's off there, anyway, Piero?'

And the fisherman responded shortly: 'Roma-poi lui---'

In point of fact the *poi lui* came so constantly into their conversation that Bird, from the pronunciation of the word, thought that there was a fellow called Louis, who, as he expressed it to himself, 'had better sit tight in Rome and not monkey with Piero after dark.'

Baiting his hook, from which he had just taken his fish, the boy one day asked at the last stage of the curiosity:

'Who's Louis, anyway, Piero, and why are you rotting him so?'

Piero gesticulated:

- 'Non & Luigi. He is called Cecco.'
- 'What's the matter with him?'

But further than this the fisherman would not go. Inclined to the sulks, the temperament of Birden preferred his silences and never tried to break in upon his morose broodings, and didn't force the man's confidences.

But one of the evenings a little while after this he put to the courier the question:

'What is the Camorra, anyhow?'

Francesco smiled brilliantly. Even the heavy, featureless face of the boy relaxed somewhat under the sunlight of the man's smile. The slender, dark face of the courier became so radiant when it smiled that it would have won the best temper possible in any society.

'It's the *vendetta*, Signorino,' said the courier. 'You've read of that? It's the *Mafia*, the Black Hand—you've heard of that? Why, it's just simply the vengeance, death, in the hand of the people.'

'Oh, lynching!'

Bird understood perfectly.

'It's the Unwritten Law, Signorino.'

The courier here turned to his patron, who had begun to listen.

'Do they lynch here?'

'No, Signore, they stab in the dark, behind the church's shadow, in a lonely vineyard, on the deserted road. Or, better still, down on the coast if the swimmer is off his guard.'

'But they hang these murderers, don't they?' Mrs. Porson, in whose honour the after-dinner party was gathered in her bedroom, asked quite peevishly from her pillows.

'Signora,' bowed the Italian, 'there is no capital punishment in Italy, and, as far as the *Camorra* is concerned, the State is blind.'

Cissy Porson's eyes were on the gay, bright face of their courier, whose expression in telling of the sinister society had not clouded. She then asked:

'What crimes do they punish like this?'

'Family affairs, private quarrels between man and man.'

'How cowardly and dreadful,' she breathed, 'to come upon a man like that in the dark!'

Her words were so intense that a little silence fell after them.

'Don't you think it is cowardly?' she asked of the others.

Francesco responded:

'No, Signorina, it is not a bad custom. I am too Italian to think so. It is better than dragging a family scandal through public gutters, or better than letting a dog live.'

Elias Porson nodded as he knocked his cigar-ash off.

'I wasn't in the West in '79 for nothing,' he said, 'nor yet last year in Cripple Creek, where you see a sort of coarse gallantry at the bottom of all their roughness. Why, there were about twenty of us sitting and drinking and talking in the town billiard-room. I was there for some mining interests. Well, at one of the tables there sat a young lady, a sort of reporter, I guess, a quiet enough little thing, and the only woman in the place. A great husky chap came along, and all he did was that he didn't take his hat off and he brushed against her. As far as I know

that's all, but not two hours afterwards that man was hanging from a tree at the end of the town. It was an insult to the politeness of Cripple Creek, the men said.'

The Italian had listened acutely, his ears following with great difficulty the broad Western accent.

'Do you mean,' he asked, 'they hung him to death for that?'

Bird snickered.

Mr. Porson said that they had done so.

'Well, I would hate to have been the woman, said Mrs. Porson severely. 'She must have felt nothing short of a murderer.'

'Well, I'd hate to be the man that Piero hates, that's who I'd hate to be!'

Bird nodded to the group.

'Piero?' questioned Francesco.

'My fisherman, Piero della Pesca; he's a corker, he's a world-beater.'

'Who will he beat?' asked the apparently bewildered Italian.

Bird laughed again, and continued his explanation.

'Why, the man from Rome, you bet your life; that is, if he's chump enough to come along.'

'Ah,' smiled Francesco, 'your Piero belongs, then, to the Camorra?'

'It looks that way,' said the boy roughly, his good-humoured part in the conversation having reached its end. He got up saying he was sleepy and that his rendezvous was for early the next morning.

But Francesco's interest in Birden's welfare seemed suddenly to be aroused.

'Signorino,' he said to the boy, 'we do not know this Piero of yours sufficiently, I think. Don't go out with him again until I have made some inquiries.'

'Oh, rot!' exclaimed the boy roughly. 'He's all right.'

But Mrs. Porson, who was now sitting up straight, was thoroughly aroused.

'Father,' she said, 'I never saw anything like you in all my life! How can you be so easy? Here you let this boy go off all day with a murderer or next to one; you don't know anything about this man more than a cat! Now hush, Bird; I'm a very sick woman, and I won't have you running this risk.'

Mr. Porson came over to her soothingly.

'See here, Mother---'

'No!' she cried strenuously, her maternal care aroused. 'Don't "mother" me, Ellie! I feel half the time lying here that something awful is in the air. They've got several cases of typhoid fever in the hotel, and there's the pest in Alexandria, and Bird's off with this evil man that we don't know anything about.'

But here the surly boy broke in as he stood at the foot of the bed—his sport, his beloved sport was to be taken away from him. His long bright days were to be robbed. His face was not pleasant to see.

'We don't know anything about Francesco,' he said brutally, but his father put his hand down on the cub's shoulder.

'You go off to bed,' he ordered sternly, 'and don't you worry your mother any more, either. I'll find out about your man, my boy, and you can come along with your sister and me until I do. That's

all right,' he waved to the courier kindly, 'you go out and arrange for Pompy to-morrow. We'll all three of us go. And now I want to get Mrs. Porson quieted down for the night.'

Birden lay, the electric light turned full on his book, in his own bed. He was not reading; he was far too brooding and angry. When he looked up at his sister, who had come in from her room, his face was as menacing as if he had been himself a member of the *Camorra*.

Cissy stood at the foot of her brother's bed in her dressing-gown. Her hair in one long, thick braid fell over her shoulder like a heavy golden serpent.

'I want to know,' she asked succinctly, 'what you were so mean to Francesco for? Why did you laugh at his mistake about the hanging?'

The boy gave a growl like a bear.

'He's always so polite to you,' continued his sister.

'I don't want his manners,' the boy shook out. She nodded gently.

'Well, you haven't any of your own. If you could only speak his language half as well as he does ours.'

'Oh, I'll speak it fast enough, don't you fret.'

Her hands, fine and white, below the frill of her dressing-gown, lay lightly on the bed-rail. She went on:

'Then what you said about our not knowing what he was.'

'Well, we don't, do we?'

'Father is satisfied, and they treat him here so well, the waiters and servants, just as if he were somebody.'

The boy growled again.

'Oh, he's somebody, all right! I've got to know what kind.'

She took no notice of his undertone.

'I hate people being rude,' she said. 'There's a great deal of it at home. I never noticed it till I came here.'

'Let him mind his own business,' said Bird.

Miss Porson insisted:

'He was minding it; he is taking care of us.'

'Not of me, you bet your life. What does he know about Piero?'

'Well, that's just it. He's going to find out.'

'Well, he can keep what he finds out to himself; and you can tell him so. Piero's a ribbon winner. I tell you he's a good lot better than a servant, any way.'

'Bird! Francesco is not a servant; he is a gentleman.'

'Huh!'

The lad's face was hot with disgust.

'I'm sure he's a gentleman.' Her voice had not once lost its control. 'There's something so refined about him.'

Bird stared at her in amazement.

'He doesn't look or act or seem like a hired person—he seems like—like——'

And here the boy laughed out loud.

'By George,' he said harshly, 'I might have known you'd get gone on him! It's always some fellow or other with you, Cissy. You're the biggest flirt I ever saw.' There was a shade of disdain of her in his voice as he said: 'It makes me sick to see you get a mash on a Dago.'

The girl's clear cheek flushed. Her eyes darkened; she caught her breath.

'Oh, you're too dreadful!' she gasped.

It had cost her an effort to come into Bird's room at all, but the singular pain his insolence had given her this evening would not let her rest. Brother and sister were not unfriendly. She had done him many little services. She had tided him over many nasty currents, stood between his father and himself more than one time. She lent him money indefinitely. Standing there at his bed's foot in the undress the closeness of their tie permitted, her neck so white and the contour of the uplifted chin so piquante, the lines of her face so sweet, her eyes so serious and reproachful, she was so lovely, so different in her appearance and expression from anything he had yet seen, that the boy softened.

'You get along to bed, Cis.' He shut his book up.
'And you tell Francesco to let me alone, and I'll leave him alone. And don't you let him fool round with you too much, or I'll break his head.'

But she had gone before he finished his coarse threat. And he stayed awake a long time going over his sport with the Capri fisherman, recalling the man's face and his vernacular, and the picturesque figure of the boatman with raised hand towards Rome, standing upright in his skiff, was the last thing that Bird saw before he fell off to sleep.

II

Nothing had dawned on Cissy's virgin soul as had the beauty of Italy, and the pictures found in her mind a sensitive negative which took the perfect impression, giving back in a charming way the harmony again. Nothing had dawned on Cissy's heart anywhere. She was unspoiled and untouched. Nothing had dawned on her emotion or senses until now.

The young girl and her courier in the ruins of Pompeii stood together at the top of a long, narrow street, whose flat paving-stones were so far apart that there was danger that Cissy's foot might catch and turn. Francesco told her so, caught her once or twice as she twisted her heel.

'Thank you,' she said, and when he set her free her soft cheek was crimson.

On either side the rows of the little devastated houses were open to the day. Their walls still stood, but the roofs were gone. At an angle, the square of what was once a fashionable thoroughfare, was a fountain, its brown edges worn deep with the marks where the hands of matron and slave had leaned thousands of years gone past. At the street's foot lay the valley with its blue undulations, its snow of scattered houses and the sheer uprising of the opposite velvet hills across the bay. The town on this afternoon was empty of tourists. It seemed as if Cissy and the Italian had Pompeii all to themselves.

'It's very much like the photographs,' she said. 'When you read books about places you find they're not, for the most part, a bit like the story. This isn't a bit as I imagined from *The Last Days of Pompeii*.'

'Ah—but the novel was written of the city before it was broken, Signorina,' he explained.

'Oh, I know,' she accepted.

'Then you're disappointed?'

'Oh, no. It's far lovelier than the book promised.' He had followed her up the steps into the interior of a little house, into the shell of what had once been a public shop. Under her feet the ancient parquet of broken bits of stucco and brick was golden as the powdered grains of pollen, and Cissy's foot resting upon the broken mosaics, small and fine in its little yellow shoe with high heels, might have passed for the golden foot of some dancing nymph in one of the faded bits of decoration saved and preserved from destruction in the Naples Museum. All round the walls ranged the remains of the broken wine jars. Cissy put her hand on the wide mouth of a great pottery vessel that had sunk into the stones.

'It gives you such an intimate sort of feeling to be here,' she said. 'I knew the book was only a story, but this seems real.' She gently patted the round edge of the jar. 'They drank out of this, didn't they? They leaned on this table, didn't they? They talked here. They were here, and I seem to see it all.'

The man opposite her, the bright sunlight round him, considered the little American with delight. He had taken off his soft hat, and his head and face in the intense light cut fine and clear as an intaglio.

'Yes,' he followed eagerly, 'they lived indeed, and laughed; were young and grew old here—and they loved here.'

· She glanced up at him, half terrified, but he went on as if he were simply in the day's work explaining Pompeii as he naturally would be called upon to explain in virtue of his rôle of guide.

'Here the Romans came to rebuild a city, already old in their time; here, over a life already past and half obliterated, they rebuilt a gay, pleasure-loving little metropolis. How serene it sleeps now! How quietly it lies in this valley, which is really, if anything ever was, the Valley of the Shadow of Death! When the destruction came the people had already written two histories. Isn't that enough record for anybody, for any people? Ah—it had been a bright life, Signorina, a life of pleasure in the very heart of beauty.'

Seeing that he expected her to make some response to what he said, the girl bent her head as if she agreed with his little exposition.

'The old and infirm, the drunken and the prisoners, were indeed perished, but many of the young and healthy escaped; the young, like you and me, got free across the bay; they could begin again new cities and make themselves new lives.'

Francesco and Cissy had left the wine-shop and slowly wandered side by side into the street, looking up and down its sunny stretch.

'However,' Cissy remarked, 'there's something awfully sad about it here. It is like a grave, and it makes me think of one in spite of all you say.'

'Let's go away, then, Signorina,' he laughed. 'Let's go before Vesuvius puts us out!'

Cissy hurried along over the stones at a dangerous rate for her ankles.

'Not so fast,' he pleaded; 'you'll hurt yourself. Here are two chairmen. Won't you let me get them for you?'

But she refused. She said she wanted to get away from Pompeii, she wanted to get out of it, and she looked up at the little houses as they passed as if she were afraid of them and their suggestions. All of a sudden it seemed it had changed for her.

'I have never in all my life,' she murmured, and

she seemed to fly out of the deserted city, 'thought so much about death.'

The courier said heartily:

'Oh, I'm so sorry! It's been an unchanced expedition.'

'Oh, no,' she protested, 'not that; it's been lovely.'

'Whereas on my part,' he said, as he sat opposite her in the train, 'I've never thought so much about life.'

The Italian's attitude towards the girl left alone with him in this unconventional manner, in this unprotected way, was all that could be required of his position. But as she now sat in the compartment opposite him, she opened her lips several times to ask him a question, but refrained. She was extremely sensitive for the first time in her life that she was alone with a man. She had been on buggy drives and sleigh rides and picnics with young men in her own town; she had thought of them all as something like Bird, only a little more polite, and these were the only differences of sex she had ever known. But there was something in the presence of Francesco that overpowered her. He himself broke the silence, saying:

'Your brother is very headstrong, Signorina. He has always had his own way.'

She said yes.

Francesco shrugged.

'But in this case it may be serious.'

'Oh, dear!' she exclaimed distressfully.

'I mean to say,' he went on, 'that this chap is not a Neapolitan; as far as I can find out, he has no friends here; and your brother being a stranger, and the more important fact that the fisherman is a member of the Camorra——'

'Oh, dear!' breathed Miss Porson again.

Francesco said gently:

'Don't be anxious. I will see what can be done.'

But she leaned forward and said with extreme seriousness:

'Oh, please don't do anything of the sort.'

Francesco looked very much surprised.

'I mean,' she faltered, 'if it is all as lawless as you say, and as mysterious, don't do anything about it.'

'But your brother?

'Well, he's seventeen years old. He's a great big, strong fellow, and he's a splendid boxer. Bird will be all right.'

A singular look came across the man's expressive face. She appeared by what she said to wish to protect him! He started as if to speak, bit his lips and sat back, saying nothing. Indeed, neither of them spoke again until the Naples station was reached, and there on the platform waiting to welcome them was the splendid boxer so able to take care of himself. He was rather shamefaced, and, having obtained of his sister at a high price the favour of being let out of the party of three, he was on his best behaviour.

'I've had a bully day, Cis; caught a whole boatfull of stuff, and you're a brick to have stood by me.'

Mrs. Porson proved to be the victim of some vague malady for which the English resident physician discovered a name. The lady was very proud of it, and resignedly embraced all the sacrifice the possession of so precious a discovery demanded of her. In America she had been too entirely carried away by the rush of existence to know how celebrated her complaint was. Her husband had made, as it were, overnight, a rapid fortune, and from one day to the next she had been presented with the problem of running an immense establishment and representing a colossal fortune. Her husband was a busy man, and he lived for sight-seeing now. Her children had always been estranged from her, but as far as she was concerned she had become a 'case,' she had something with a long, distinguished name. She was written down in a note-book, she was going to be sent to the Lancet, she contented herself with her state.

With the peculiar selfishness of the invalid, Mrs. Porson immolated the family on her altar, and her husband was the chief and cheerful sacrifice. spent hours reading to her, cheering her enforced seclusion, and during his imprisonment relinquished to Cissy the joys of sight-seeing, leaving her, Francesco, and Bird to their own sweet wills. But the will of one of them, at least, was bitterly thwarted. The day after his truant escapade, when Birden left his sister and the guide at the Pompeian station, Piero della Pesca disappeared, sailed, as it were, away from the face of the earth, sailed away at least as far as any inquiries of Bird could discover. The boy was desolate. There were hosts of fishermen with their boats, men who asked nothing better than to accompany the young American on his excursions. Indeed, they asked so well and so urgently that finally the boy furiously sent them all about their affairs by aid of the Italian vernacular which

he had picked up. Piero was not only gone, but he had left no sign or trace of himself. Finally, Birden, who not only valued him as an aid to his sport, but had a kind of rude friendship for the fellow, unbent so far as to ask the courier:

'Say, that fellow I 've been out with—you know—Piero—he's gone off somewhere; nobody knows anything about him. You don't happen to know anything about it, do you?'

The Italian hesitated. The type of the young chap's face was as unpleasant to his æsthetic sense as the sister's was delightful. Birden had a face, but no features. He was the usual American, no clear silhouette or direct trait: a composite mouth, and objects that went for nose and brows. His complexion was bad, his dress at once expensive and careless.

Francesco hesitated, and then said:

'It is not at all unlikely that your fisherman has been told to leave the port.'

'Told by whom?'

'The authorities, possibly; that's what they do with suspicious characters sometimes, even in Italy.'

For a few seconds the boy said nothing, but his eyes never left the courier.

'I'll bet you sent him away yourself,' he said, after a second, with a light laugh. 'I'm on to you all right, Francesco. You've got him sent away.'

His companion made no response.

'If you did,' pursued the boy in a low tone, 'by George, you had better look out. I tell you I won't forget it.' He had no command of language and no control, but blustered out what came to his mind.

'It is my business who I go out with, and you had no right to jump in. And if you have sent him away, you can get him back again,' he nodded fiercely. 'Do you hear?'

The Italian's face as well as the boy's had grown very white. Francesco placed his hands behind his back, and they met together.

'I know nothing about your friend,' he said quietly.

'I don't believe you!'

Francesco bowed.

'You're a boy,' he said, 'and you are the son of the man who employs me.'

Birden laughed. He was too angry even to understand the other.

'You get him back,' he pursued, 'and I'll hush up; but if you don't,' he went on blindly, 'why, I'll tell my father how you're going on with my sister.'

If Francesco had been the low hound his master's son thought him, he would have sprung on the boy and struck him in the face, but the Italian had marvellously mastered himself. The pitiful specimen of bad-breeding and youth was too beneath him to lessen his self-control.

'Signorino,' he said coolly, 'you will tell the Signore, your father, what you think fit. Meanwhile, as I am expected with an engagement,' his English twisted his word, 'I will say good-day.'

But his little mistake, as well as his coolness, inflamed the boy further.

'Oh, you can't jolly me with your manners,' he said, 'and I mean every word I say. What grudge you've got against my fun I don't know, or what grudge you've got against Piero, but there is one somewhere. Perhaps you're afraid of him yourself.'

He grew keener and advanced a little towards the Italian. 'Perhaps you know him better than I think you do. Perhaps,' he went all the way, furious, 'perhaps you're the man from Rome!'

He scarcely knew what he meant or what he said. He wanted to pour out on the self-contented enemy every insult he could command.

'What,' questioned Francesco, 'has Piero against this man from Rome?'

'Never you mind,' retorted the boy, somewhat disconcerted. 'Just you send for him to come back, if you want to keep right with me.'

'Birden, Birden,' called his mother's voice from the inner room. The boy lingered. His hand was on the knob of the door, and he paused and threw back over his shoulder:

'Just look out for what I say!'

Ш

The engagement with which Francesco 'was expected' waited for him in one of the upper rooms of the Naples Museum. His patron's daughter, for once adequately chaperoned by both the French maid and the trained nurse, who was off duty for a couple of hours, stood waiting for the courier in one of the sections of the gallery. More accurately, one of the three waited, for Louise and the trained nurse had struck up a sympathetic intimacy, and were absorbed in their curious rhapsody over the remains of surgical instruments that had lately been discovered.

The fact that Francesco was a man in a servile

position, for what, indeed, was a courier but a servant?—the fact that he received orders as their coachman did and was paid for them—the fact of his position, even to the little democrat, had been a shadow which at first clouded her thoughts each time Francesco came to her mind. But it was not long before the personality of this new individual, of this member of a society, whatever might be its status, to which she was unaccustomed, this man of a different race and blood and character, triumphed entirely over whatever position he held.

'I've never seen anybody like him, never!' she mused a hundred times. 'He is brighter and more educated than any one I ever saw or knew. His manners are charming, he knows everything.' One by one the young men of La Crosse passed in review before her and were ignominiously relegated to the Western shades. One by one, smooth-faced college men or athletic giants, with good-humour and smiles to commend them, fell back, and the Italian she had known for a short fortnight took his place as little less than a god to her in comparison.

Francesco found Miss Porson bending over a case of petrified fruits in a little room. At sight of him the two women who had her in care wandered away and delivered her, as had her mother and father, to the sole society of the guide. He saw her change colour as he came up: she taxed him with being very, very late. He told her nothing about the ugly controversy with Birden which had delayed him. It was not in his way ever to carry disagreeable news. The motto of his family was 'Cerco il sole' (I seek the sun), and Francesco lived up to it as nearly as he could.

As the two passed from case to case—captivated by the spectacle of the remains of a complete life and civilisation whose very utterances, whose forms and traditions had been, as far as anything can be, made eternal before the existence of their own lives-Cissy furtively looked up at her guide. Before joining her Francesco had stopped to change his dress. A long, loose ulster of rough cloth, a stiff hat, a cane with a curious handle, a dress different from the one she had been accustomed to seeing him in-more careful, more correct—caught her eye and her attention. The bright careless speech of which she was prettily mistress at all times failed her when she was with Francesco. She never used any frivolous phrases; she had a certain awe of him, and a singular respect to be inspired by one whose position was little better than a servant's. She wondered what his change of dress meant: it had a travelling air. 'He looks,' she thought, and with the thought there came a sudden pang, 'as if he were going away, as if he were going to take a trip.'

He had the air of a man who is contemplating a journey. Before she could speak he said:

'Signorina, look! In that little jar are olives; they were placed so nearly two thousand years ago on some sunny day in some sunny room in the buried city whose streets we have walked through. One by one these olives were dropped in their little cubes, perhaps with the hand of some slave-girl as she prepared the banquet for a Roman epicure. Who knows? Who can tell for what occasion they were destined? Heavens!' he exclaimed, 'it doesn't make very much difference to-day, does it? Yet on it two thousand years ago perhaps the fate of many people

depended. It must have been, you know, about the time the city was destroyed. Possibly some one was destined to be sprung upon unawares and poisoned at the feast. No,' he said, more gently, 'that's not an agreeable story, is it? Perhaps it was some banquet given by a lover for the woman he loved; at any rate, look at the olives. See, they have been kept fresh for the palate, and we perceive to-day the lusciousness that some of those old, old people of a forgotten race almost would have enjoyed.'

The Italian pointed to where, from the skin of the little black objects, an oily ooze exuded, and drop by drop, like pearls, the oil hung on the ebony spheres of the petrified fruit. His voice grew deeper; there was a passionate ring in it.

'That is life!' he said. 'Isn't it strange that those inanimate objects should possess it, and for so long? So to live, so to persist, so to flow with life! And what do these wretched little globules matter?—and the women and their lovers are not even ashes.'

Cissy's eyes were on the jar. She watched the fruits, fascinated by them, but more fascinated by his voice.

'Yes,' she said to herself softly, 'the olives didn't get to the feast, that's so; but then they are better off than any other olives that had ever been created, aren't they? Just think how many thousands of years they have lived.'

He led her from case to case, explaining to her, telling her, in the most charming, picturesque language, the history of the things they saw. He made the past live for her, re-clothing the forms with flesh and colour and life till, as they went from pallid object to pallid object, the fruits took on again their purple and their bloom, the petals of the flowers came back to them and trembled round the petrified calyx. The ghosts of stuffs, the spectres of warp and pile filled in their torn and rotten holes for Cissy's eyes, and the various fabrics with their striped and woven colours became soft again, and the hangings of Rome and Greece in all the beauty of the loom hung before Cissy. Wine jars replenished themselves, and the ancient glass, whose colours were like fairy bubbles, with fire and smoke and dust and years, cleared again and shone with the wines of Athens and Capri.

Pompeii before it was destroyed, in a lovely little picture, glowed before Cissy Porson; its soul, as it were, returned to it by the revivifying words of the man at her side. Yes, that was it—he was life itself! And as she touched his arm in bending over the case she was electrified. Her blood beat through her until the lyre of her feelings made a melody which threatened to sing out aloud in some evident tone.

The two young people passed along before the glass screen containing some ancient signet rings through whose transparence, through jasper and chalcedony, and topaz and sapphire, the light shone. Francesco drew a ring from his little finger and held it out to her, tapping the glass at one of the corners.

'Look at that ring; it's a duplicate of mine. The motto is very old. The one in the case is in Greek and mine is in Italian: "Cerco il sole," I seek the sun.'

She turned it over in her hands; it was a superb

ruby set in some foreign fashion and carved deep intaglio. She weighed it, for it was very heavy in her little palm. As she stood so near him, his ring in her hand, without intending to do so—for she always avoided them—Cissy met Francesco's eyes, and her own were caught by a magnet too strong to withstand.

For some minutes their mutual gaze did not falter. They were alone in the room of fruits and food, relics of a time long extinct. In another second the girl found herself drawn into Francesco's arms. She made no resistance; she had, indeed, no wish to resist. It was as if she too had sought the sun, and it had found her, and she had been caught up into the splendour of its rays. When he set her free she was weeping gentle tears that had met his kisses on her face. She leaned on the edge of the case and put her head on her hand.

- 'Carissima,' said the man deeply, 'why do you so?'
 - 'I don't know.'
 - 'You are not happy?'
 - 'Yes.'
 - 'Tell me so again.'
 - 'Yes.'

With a determination as tender as it was imperious, Francesco took her hands away.

'I love you,' he said.

She could only bow her head.

He repeated it and asked her forcefully: 'And you, you?'

She tried to speak, but the great emotion, so far more overwhelming than any petty flood her innocent life had known, was too tremendous for her. Again he held her to him, and in what she could whisper he gathered the knowledge that brought him all the sun he sought. In the storm of nature that had so unexpectedly come upon them neither of them had any thought of the public place in which they were until, after a long silence, the girl said:

'We must go. It must be very late.'

And then Francesco was struck by the fact that it was not only very late, but very dark, very dark indeed. He took his watch out, made an exclamation and started forward.

'It is long past five,' he said. 'The museum has been shut an hour! We are locked in!'

She shrank near to him. 'Oh dear!' she murmured. 'What shall we do?'

'Oh, don't be afraid,' he assured her. 'We have only to traverse the gloomy room to find a good guardian at the door who would rather let us out than keep us in, as we are neither curiosities nor petrified.'

She kept close to his side in their quick pilgrimage past the ghostly things, the cases of cold objects which had lost all the animation and existence they had had a few moments ago. The man was the life, and he was going with her, by her side. He was so glowing, so tall, so beautiful—she clung to him. She put both her hands on his arm, and he pressed her close, stopping at the last door to kiss her, to murmur a few words, that made her flame from foot to head. It was very dark—they could scarcely see the shadowy staircase. With a murmured word he picked her up like a feather and carried her downstairs.

- 'Do you think they'll let us out?' she whispered.
 'I would not like to stay here with so many things of death.'
 - 'Oh, hush,' he said, 'always death!'
- 'I won't,' she promised, 'I won't say it any more,' and with a wonderful grace for one so young, close to his cheek she murmured: 'You're alive, and that's all that matters.'

As he set her down in the grand hall he led her by the hand like a little girl towards a light near the far door. It was the watchman's light, and he let them out with smiling and much amusement, and a great deal of content over the louis, yellow in his yellow old hand.

IV

It was still light when they came out of the Museo. The open cab which took them home chose the longest way. Cissy, her hands folded in her lap. her head bent, sat without speaking until, relieved at her companion's silence, and the fact that he, too. made no offer to woo or to speak, she slowly lifted her eyes and looked about her at Naples, through which, not three weeks before, she had ridden in the hotel omnibus. The little streets turned and twisted tortuous ways, filled with a curiously vivid throng. Here and there the early lights shone pallidly in the lingering day. Up and down the long flights of steps, stairways forming alleys between closely-built houses, the men and women, with burdens on their backs or empty-handed, slowly passed along homewards. Goatherds drove their brown goats with tinkling bells along the sidewalks, the little creatures

jostling near the foot-passengers, crushing themselves against the wall or stopping before the door of an old *palazzo* to be milked.

From the wide-open porta of a church a coffin was carried, covered by garlands. The dead man's hat and sword and cloak lay upon the bier, and on the church steps, waiting to follow the cortège, the Franciscan friars, with lighted candles, stood barefoot and bare-headed, and close to them the mummers in their long white hoods, from which their eves gleamed. On the left of the church, down a flight of steep stairs, whose apex was lost in the shadow, there appeared to tumble and fall a veritable cascade of flowers. All the way uphill the vendors had their merchandise, and lilies, white as milk. camellias, white as snow, roses, jonguils, and violets massed their beauty, flung their beauty like fragrant banners upon the old brown stairs. The streets seemed full of perfume, and there blent with the odour of the flowers an acrid smell, the smell of wood fires and the smell of incense from the church. A boy with violets came running alongside the carriage as the little vehicle tore through the town as though the very devil himself were after the lovers. A bunch of violets laid upon her folded hands was the first sign that Francesco gave the girl of himself. She took the flowers, but did not lift her eves.

Naples glowed and seethed and swarmed round her. She had feasted upon beauty for many days, and had seen everything through the eyes of love. In this way her sensations had grown keen and her taste developed. And the sensuous charm of the Italian seaport tingled in her. Young barbarian as Cissy Porson was, she responded to it wonderfully. Now a great tide of happiness swelled within her. She seemed to be lifted by it as a boat is lifted, and to be cradled upon a sea of joy. Her breath came quickly, and, as if afraid of the new emotion, she gave a little sigh and glanced timidly up at the man at her side. The little victoria drawn by the strong stallion, with his tinkling bells, now began more reasonably the ascent of the hill.

Francesco leaned towards Cissy and put his arm about her waist.

'I will make you so happy,' he whispered to her; 'always, always!'

She has this to remember, and one of his hands over hers under the flowers, and the fragrance of the violets coming up to her with every word he said, so that never again, never again can their odour mean anything to Cissy Porson but Naples on a warm winter's evening and first love.

They were almost at the door of the hotel before the young girl had spoken at all.

'I don't really care to know,' she said hesitatingly, 'you might be Bird's fisherman. I half wish you were, for then I could go away with you in a boat. You might be the man who is driving us so slowly; then you would drive me to the end of the world. But I don't think you are what you pretend to be, and if you don't want me to know, I will wait.'

And Francesco had kissed her hands and laughed, and told her that she was as wise as an owl, and that if he were the king himself he would not be high enough for her. And Cissy persisted: 'Are you a king?' And when Francesco had said: 'Ma che, no,' she put it to him again: 'Are you a courier?'

'I am your guide,' he had told her, 'to lead you all over the world, and I've shown you at leastyou'll grant me that—the way that is best of all.' But seeing that she was troubled, that she grew grave, he had said: 'Carissima, no, I am not a courier; I took the place for a jest. But won't you trust me a little longer, until I can tell your father what I really am, and what I really want? I should have told you long ago, but I have been carried away by the romance of it all. My name is Di Torrenti, Giorgio Francesco Maria di Torrenti; I am a Roman, and I want your father to let you be my wife. He is so kind,' the Roman went on, 'that when he knows my name and my family, and how I love you, don't you think he will forgive my folly? Others have had to forgive me all my life. Don't you think your father will be as kind as they?'

Cissy did not speak, from timidity and shyness and overwhelming emotion.

Francesco urged her:

'Won't you ask him to forgive me?' Then she nodded, and, bending to her, he pursued: 'And if he gives you to me, will you come?'

She pressed the hands that held hers for answer, but the Italian was determined.

'Cissy,' he pleaded, 'will you—will you be my wife?'
And she said a 'yes' so faint that he kissed the word as it trembled on her lips. She has all this to remember, to realise, to dream about. It was a night vivid to pain. And as she lived over every hour in her room, to which she went directly on coming in, it seemed to her that her young heart would never be strong enough and big enough to contain her joy.

v

When Mr. Porson had aided the trained nurse in getting his wife settled and put away for the night, he came out on the balcony of their salon with his cigar. The holiday spirit that the trip had at first aroused in him was quite gone. Mrs. Porson's migraine had killed every spark of gaiety. He had not been beyond the hotel office for days.

'We might just as well be in Wisconsin,' he had said, but Cissy's pleasure had stopped the reflection short. The girl was having a good time. He sat down in a chair beside the rail, stretched out his great limbs like a tired dog, smoked a few moments vigorously, then held his cigar off and looked at it. It was just Susan's luck to be sick here in Europe, he mused. He could remember nothing that he had ever tried to do with her since his marriage that had turned out all right. Their children—they had had seven—had died all but these two. She had been perpetually bearing them, struggling with their illnesses, weeping for them, and for many years they had been poor. Nor had there ever been any great passion to help them bear their losses. Porson had married her out of pity and in a crisis of misery when he realised that he could never marry the woman he loved. In this gay European city, where freedom from great affairs had been until now a welcome rest, he felt that Mrs. Porson was out of place. It had been impossible for him not to substitute mentally, from time to time, another image in place of the tired, ailing woman in whom a certain egoism had developed as years went by, and who could find nothing better to do than to nurse her ills.

The woman he should have married would have been perfect here. He could see her making the excursions with him. He remembered her as he had known her, and that, of course, was nearly forty years ago. She was young, and her charm—none of it was lost. But a man like Mr. Porson would never permit this luxury of reflection, and always invariably the image of his daughter took the place of the other, and he welcomed it as being a proper and legitimate pleasure to consider Cissy's pleasure. He knew that she was as pretty as a picture, but he was also keen to see that in the past fortnight she had grown more pretty. He only saw her at dinner and at lunch, but each day she bloomed more charmingly and flowered more delightfully.

'Italy's all right for her,' he mused. 'Cissy is having a good time.' And he radiated over the knowledge. At times it was a pleasure to be rich, a pleasure at all times to be rich when he could dower her. Heiresses with less money than his daughter had, had married dukes and marquises in the Old World. Well, he didn't care anything about a title. Plain 'Mister' was good enough for him. If the girl liked the man, if he was decent enough for her—good enough for Cissy he couldn't be. No man, to his sentimental requirements, was good enough for the innocent beauty. But as men go, he must be decent and Cissy must love him.

'That's the whole show,' he mused, nodding to his cigar. 'The whole show.' And the long ash which had been forming at the end of his weed dropped in a mass upon the balcony floor.

Cissy had that night gone directly to her room; pleading a headache, she had not appeared at dinner,

and it was now towards ten o'clock. Unable to rest, and feeling terrified at the possession which gave her pain as well as joy, she, too, went out on the balcony to seek the freshness of the night. She saw the figure of her father in the shadow and the light of his cigar. She went towards him with a surge of tenderness—this kind father who had given her everything always, who loved her so. Happy to delirium almost, she longed to overflow with her secret and her love, but she could not tell him; she had promised sacredly to say nothing until her lover gave her leave.

She laid her arm round her father's shoulder, and put her face close to his with an appealing, womanly sweetness.

Mr. Porson, who had heard the rustle of her dress as she crossed the balcony towards him, patted her cheek.

'Feel better?' he asked. 'Got all used up, I guess, in that Museum. You're a terror at sight-seeing, Cissy. You'll have to rest or you'll be laid up like your mother.'

He detailed Mrs. Porson's bad nerves, and the wearying day, his own fatigue showing through the narrative.

'I would have hustled out of Naples a hundred times,' he said, 'but you seemed to like it so well.'

Accustomed to the exaggerated freedom of the women of his own country, and the untrammelled intercourse between boys and girls, Mr. Porson never once thought of the impropriety of his daughter's unguarded wanderings about with a strange foreigner. He had never thought of Francesco at all, except to like him in an impersonal way, and he had always

supposed Birden to be with his sister. He put his hand again to his daughter's cheek, for Cissy had not moved.

'Why, what's the matter?' he inquired with the greatest gentleness; 'why, what's the matter?'

The cheek was wet.

The next moment Cissy was sobbing in his arms.

Porson had seen his daughter laugh many times, he had seen her in the gayest of caprices, but since she was a child he had never seen her cry, and it smote him to his soul. He held her quietly for a moment, and then, after her sobs had subsided, he said:

'Can't you tell father what it is, little girl?'

And she murmured that she was so happy—so happy. She sat up and dried her eyes and kissed him, and said that she was a silly little goose and only tired and nervous, and that she would really go to bed now.

Troubled and touched, bewildered, and in his simplicity and masculine reserve unused to the task of unravelling the complexities of feminine problems, the father let her go, saying:

'Now you let me know if you want anything to make you sleep; and don't you cry, my child; it hurts your father to see your tears.'

He led her back to the window that opened into her own room, and put his hand to his waistcoat pocket and drew out a roll of money.

'I got out a little extra money for you to-day to buy some of these pretty things in the shop windows.' He put the money into her hand. 'And, remember, if there's anything you want, you ask your old dad for it. Hear?' 'Oh, father!' she breathed, clinging to his hand. He lingered.

'Well?'

'It seems to me as if I had everything in the world.'

Porson laughed softly.

'That's all right,' he said; 'you wait a few years, until you fall in love.'

His reverie in the balcony shadow had carried him to other days, and looking into his daughter's lovely, tearful face, he said slowly:

'And when that time comes and you're sure it's the right man, you come and tell me. I don't care anything about money; you'll have enough for both of you. And if there's anything I can do, I'll do it.'

Thanking him, she whispered:

'Oh, yes-yes, I'll come, father! Good-night!'

VI

'I've won, Giorgio,' the younger gentleman said.

The other occupant of the room had been playing and singing an Italian song. He closed it with a few notes and rose from the piano.

'I'll have to take your word for it.'

'No,' protested the first speaker, 'you won't have to take it unvouched for, although it's perfectly good coin.'

The singer came out towards his friend, who stood in the balcony smoking and talking back over his shoulder into the room.

The Marchese de Silveria was short and plump.

He was of a shining immaculateness that shed forth a faint and delightful odour of iris, and his short moustaches, waxed at the ends and rather military, displayed the well-cut, handsome mouth of a selfindulgent, happy man.

'What did you do, Cecco?'

'Why, you remember betting with me a fortnight ago, in Rome, don't you?'

'Oh, yes,' serenely confessed the other, 'but I had some money then.'

'Well, you'll have to find forty pounds now,' returned his companion unsympathetically, 'for I have fairly won. You laid me forty pounds that I couldn't get a position in twenty-four hours to work for my living in a strange place without experience.'

The jovial De Silveria chuckled delightedly.

'Oh, come then, what did you do? Now, from the beginning—the beginning, I say; let's have every step. Worked for your living? Dio!' he giggled aloud.

'Well, it's not a very exciting history, my poor Giorgio,' said the other. 'I'm afraid you'll find it rather a bore. I went to Naples, where I had never been but once, and, having a vivid remembrance of the tourists that make the place hideous at certain seasons, it occurred to me, why not faire semblable blague to one of those dapper creatures who call themselves couriers, one of the ciceroni.'

'A guide!' grinned his companion. 'Dio mio!'

The other took a couple of puffs at his cigarette, his dark eyes upon the night that lay before them.

'Oh, a chap I know who was painting there loaned me an old hat and some soft ties. Otherwise, I assure you, I wore my own clothes, and it shows how little natural distinction I must have, for I simply went down to the dock where the big vessels from America come in and besieged a party of North Americans. And '—he leaned forward, laughing charmingly—'the miracle of it all is that they took me—took me, my dear man, as I was—soft hat and red tie, and without a shade of doubt in their trusting hearts, or any credentials on my part. I babbled about letters and hotel-porters, but not a soul asked me any question, and to keep up the good work, amico, no person in the hotel challenged my good faith or bothered me the least bit in the world. I came, I was engaged, I reigned supreme!'

'Santa Maria!' murmured his friend; 'but don't tell me they paid you!'

- 'Of course they did-fifteen lire a day.'
- 'You took it?'
- 'Naturalmente.'
- 'Faugh!' gesticulated De Silveria; 'that is too dreadful; no Di Torrenti has done a stroke of work in five hundred years.'

Francesco smiled.

- 'Well, it was not all work,' he said musingly.
- 'What do you know about antiquity or monuments?' asked the other. 'A cicerone! Diavolo!'
- 'Well, more than the Porsons, of Weesconseen,' replied the young man.
 - 'Possibly, but you're a base fraud.'
- 'Oh, I felt it,' agreed the other, 'more than you know, but I'll make right what I can.'

De Silveria came up to his guest and stood in front of him, his fat legs apart.

'You seem almost sad,' he said, scrutinising him,

'and you're thin too—oh, poor dear! What were the horrible things like?'

'Like North Americans,' answered Di Torrenti. 'A lady mother who has an eternal migraine, a bad-tempered cub of a boy, a charming gentleman millionaire, and—oh, Cissy, Cissy!—a girl, una figlia.'

'Ah!' the Marchese cheered perceptibly. 'Nous entrons dans la voie des aveux. A little girl?'

'Little girl? Um-not large,' said Di Torrenti.

After a few moments, when De Silveria had lit his own cigarette from Francesco's, he murmured:

'You poked and mooned about with these for seven days? Why didn't I see you? I should have died. I can imagine that I see you, however: "Signorini, here you have the celebrated Bay of Naples," and so forth and so forth. It's worth forty pounds, if I am strapped, my dear chap. What have you done with them, Cecco? You'll have to hide if you go to Rome.'

Francesco did not reply at once.

'But where are your Americans?' pursued the Italian. 'Still at Bertolini's?'

'Ecco, eccola. You're a good soul,' said Di Torrenti, smiling, 'but,' and he tapped his friend's waistcoat, 'but you really must not get so fat, amico mio. Think of la bellissima——'

'Chut!' frowned the other, 'don't talk of women, unless'—and he fixed his friend's careless face—'unless that's what you've sent for me to talk about.'

Di Torrenti threw his cigarette out, and it spun, still lighted, and floated down to the sidewalk.

De Silveria was amused as a child. The little

wager of his contriving, the foolish jest had succeeded, and now Di Torrenti was about, so he hoped, to add one more picturesque touch to the scene.

'I must,' he said, 'positively ring for chocolate.' He flitted back into the room to send for some cigars, and whilst he waited Francesco looked thoughtfully out into the night. His figure, the cut and make of his features, his attitude, gestures, and bearing, proclaimed the old race, the very old race, of which he was the last male. His face was more fine than beautiful, although his eyes were remarkable and the nose and mouth finely cut. When he spoke, and smiled, his expression was almost dazzling, his atmosphere always bright and exhilarating.

In a few seconds a small table was fetched in with the chocolate set upon it. Francesco ordered for himself a liqueur. Sitting over the fragrant cup, just inside the window, De Silveria divided his attention between his chocolate and the young duke.

'Bene,' he sighed with content, 'begin, begin, as I said before, at the beginning.'

Di Torrenti gazed down at the chubby little figure meditatively, and said abruptly:

'Do you remember Marina?'

The Marchese wrinkled his brows and shrugged amiably, and his manner plainly said: 'Ah, but there are so many Christian names, my dear fellow.'

Di Torrenti was indulgent.

'Marina Pesca, of Capri.'

De Silveria lifted his cup to his lips and drank, then put it down.

'The big brown girl, Marta bellissima?' He seemed to recall it. 'E altro.'

'Well, after you went back to Rome,' Francesco continued. 'You remember?'

His friend seemed to do so.

Francesco passed his hand through his dark hair. His recital, although he was determined upon making it, was apparently not agreeable to him.

'She got very fond of me—very. It was hard to break with her. I made all sorts of promises, which I never kept.'

'Naturally,' understood his friend.

'I sent her a great deal of money, which was all returned.'

'One doesn't need money in Capri,' murmured De Silveria; 'there's nothing to buy there.'

'It has bothered me a great deal,' said Di Torrenti. He stopped.

The other man, to whom this story was disappointing, quickly finished his chocolate.

'It shows,' he said cheerfully, 'what a kind heart you have, amico.'

Di Torrenti went on:

'When I first came here I really intended to go over to Capri. It was one reason why I came to Naples. I wished to see Marina. I had a melancholy and a sinister feeling about her. Do you know,' he said impressively, 'if I had gone there and found her I should have married her.'

De Silveria looked at his friend quickly and burst out laughing.

'I can only say that for your family's sake as well as for my own I thank God you didn't go. It is even better to imagine you taking the North Americans up to the crater Vesuvius.'

Francesco seemed totally indifferent to his friend's

mood. He appeared, indeed, to regard him as only a background for his moody story.

'Well, I didn't go,' he went on slowly, 'for I found out more than I expected without going.'

'Caro mio!' exclaimed the other; 'of course she had married without your consent. Tira, lira, I should decidedly say, my dear chap.'

'She is dead,' said Di Torrenti gently.

De Silveria greeted this news with a slight inclination of his head. There is a superstitious and melancholy impressiveness about death to the Italian mind. They respect and fear it. It is eminently unlucky. De Silveria looked at his fingertips meditatively. The story was evidently not going to be so gay as he had hoped. He had not yet discovered why Francesco had called him from the Corso and the Pincio to hear the simple dirge. Now, if it had only been an affair with an actress or some charming woman—even with the North American. As a gentle hint to his friend, who seemed lost in his thoughts, De Silveria opened his cigarette case and offered it.

Francesco roused himself.

'I want you to bear in mind,' he said, 'that I would have married her.'

'I will certainly do so, Cecco,' cheerfully answered his friend; 'it's very noble and unusual of you.' (Death never came more a tempo, he mused.) 'But all this,' he added, 'is more than a year ago, my dear boy.'

Di Torrenti laughed out loud.

'A year!' he repeated. 'To-day I've been looking over rags that have lasted two thousand years. The olives are still moist in their glasses. If such things persist——!'

'Chut, chut!' purred De Silveria. He was very much bored indeed. 'Don't, my dear Torrenti, work for your living any more.' He smiled and rose. 'It's disastrous. Come, old man, be sensible. What if every one of us brooded so over his escapades?'

The other one looked down at him rather cynically.

'And you call death an escapade?' he asked. Then before his friend could shrug in despair, Francesco changed his attitude. 'Oh, you're right, of course, of course, Giorgio. I've forgotten all you have wished me to forget, I fancy. It's an ugly story—a dream.' He put his hands in his pockets, threw his figure back a little, and continued: 'Of course, all those escapades, as you call them, aren't love, and when one really knows what love is——'He turned abruptly and went out again on to the balcony.

Naples, all sown with lights, stretched below him. The sky was bright with all its stars; they seemed every one of them to be visible. Orion, like a white globe, hung in his orbit, and across the broad fair blue there flashed a meteor, which fell in the direction of the island of Capri. A boy, singing, passed under the club window. He was singing the song that Cissy Porson had heard in the little restaurant of the Promessi Sposi. At the pretty melody the Italian's face lightened. He drew a long breath. His mood had passed at Cissy's touch, as it were, and when De Silveria came out to him he greeted his friend with his old gaiety.

'Oh, come back inside,' urged Giorgio; 'it gives me neuralgia, the night here, always. Tell me some more about your killing tourists: la mamma, il papa, e la figlia?'

'Ah!' breathed Cecco; 'yes, yes, cerco il sole.'

'Benissimo!' cried the other. 'Let's at least go back to the electric lights.' And he drew Francesco within the window's embrasure.

VII

On the following day Francesco with characteristic precipitation left for Rome, and gave himself no time for meditation until alone in the red and brown palazzo where he had been born and bred. His people were away, and the big grandiose place was all his, a state of affairs going well with his present desire for solitude, and one for which he was egotistically grateful. Here in the splendid old palace he had spent the most of his life in more or less acceptance and accordance with the traditions of the family. The Di Torrenti were stupid, religious, and deeply devoted to their only son. Francesco was sure of ultimate forgiveness for all his follies, and counted on the remarkable indulgence which, in the end, he had never failed to receive. But he did not look upon his new love as a folly. Indeed, compared with his irregular and unconventional modes of sentimental enjoyment, this was the one serious affair of his life. He had no misgivings as to the way his people would receive the news that he was to marry an American girl. He loved his parents, and was in turn so adored that he knew he had only to encircle his mother with his arm, to kiss her, in order, as far as the Duchess was concerned, to possess the whole Italian peninsula.

He was rich in his own right under his grand-

father's testament. He had never thought of the Porson millions, and in his letter to his family had forgotten with singular reticence to mention them.

The old buildings, whose stones were reddish and stained, whose façade rose up in the bright afternoon alongside a narrow alley crowded with foot-passengers, at once the scum and affluence of Rome, looked formidable to him and inhospitable. Its wide doors were barred like a prison, its windows as well. But nevertheless the Palazzo di Torrenti never appeared to Francesco so homelike as on this return. He was accustomed to the vast proportions of his house, to the richness of its decorations, to the treasures of its possessions; to the high ceilings and the splendid rooms that stretched away north and south, all the front windows giving on the Tiber.

But now the palazzo was for the first time personal to him, and even as he went in and gave up his hat, stick, and gloves to the octogenarian major-domo, he was struck with the beauty of the hallway, with the grandeur of its great proportions, and with the idea that it was his: his home and a decent one, a charming one, a fitting one to give to the woman a man loved. It grew more and more personal as he went on upstairs, passing the reception-rooms and the gallery, the vast and quiet corridors; but there was no melancholy that he would have permitted to speak to him on this day, and his own cheery apartments put a finishing touch to his bien-être as he went in.

Di Torrenti's own rooms were new—that is, they were modern as far as an English decorator could make them. The young woman was a little Anglophobe, at least as far as comfort and hygiene were

concerned. A fire burned in the study, there was a lighted lamp on his table, and his own man waited with his master's evening clothes laid out on the bed. On Francesco's dressing-table was carefully displayed an invitation-card whose date told him that he was expected to a dance at the Palazzo Dolphini; and to assist at this function, to which the fine fleur of Rome would be present, the servant had naturally supposed that his master had returned from Naples. The invitation, and the fact that he was certainly more than expected, was a worldly break to Francesco's train of thoughts; and the slight chill of the room downstairs through which he had passed rose up through the parquet as it were and gave him a little shiver, and he decided that he could as well follow out his thoughts in the carriage, and even at the ball, as here.

As he so decided, it occurred to him that it would be amusing as well to bring his vision of Cissy into worldly Roman society. He wanted to think of her amongst his own people, and to see how other women would appear compared with the naïve little They had been lifeless creatures for American. several weeks to him, and not one woman of his past had crossed his mind since Cissy Porson's eyes had met his own. That is, with one exception, and that face had been forced upon him by tragedy. Francesco imagined that Cissy was a diminutive of Cecilia, as he called her over again to himself, walking up and down his rooms, making his modest and scrupulous toilet. There were saints in the Calendar called so, and he had prayed to them as a boy. The long, lovely figure of the sweetest saint of holy history, Saint Cecilia, as she lies on her marble bier clothed in her single garment, came to his mind; but Cissy was all roundness and life and mocking sweetness. She was not a saint; she was a human, adorable woman. So charming a one, and so sweet. She was his, all his. Could it be possible? Before his mirror, tying his white cravat, his cheeks burned and his fine eves darkened, and he again interrupted his dressing to pace up and down his rooms. There was not a sound outside, no carriages were passing in the street, the tide of life had swept at the hour it was away from the alleys near the Palazzo di Torrenti. The rooms below were silent—he knew it. Oh, if he might only have fetched her here with him; if, as they had been alone in that great museum of antiquity, they could be alone together here! Ah. Cissy, Cissy!

Just underneath his own was a suite of apartments whose beauty he knew. On the walls were painted the story of Una and her Lion. In the centre of one of these chambers stood a great Renaissance bed, hung with curtains of twelfth century silk. To reach it there were steps to climb. Francesco had been born on this bed; the rooms were the regal apartments of the palazzo, and his mother had come here as a young bride to these wedding chambers. They should be Cissy's, the apartments of the new Duchessa, the young Duchessa!

As he mused, the stiffness of his collar suffocated him. He tore it off, his cravat as well, and gave freedom to his throat. His man had gone for the carriage, and Francesco locked his door, took his coat off, threw it down and stood thus, his hand clasped behind his back, staring into the nearest room. It was his own bedroom. He had been

educated by the Dominicans to habits of great simplicity, and there was nothing in these simple apartments to suggest the worldly life of the young Roman. A little iron bed stood in the corner of the other room, a mat on the floor; a prie-dieu and a crucifix formed the only furnishings. could have been more monastical or monklike. Di Torrenti was not struck by the chaste rigidity of his room. He saw the one downstairs with the festal and beautiful tapestries, with the gold carvings and the black wood of the nuptial bed. Ah, if she were only here, if she were only here! Cissy had a small foot and a hand which had made him think of a flower, it was so white. Her own rings were superb, far too handsome for a young unmarried woman; that was American taste. He would give her others, and the one gold ring first of all. But if she were only here! He would fill the palazzo with flowers on that day, and there should be no one near them for weeks and weeks. After that, they would throw the house open and let all Rome in with the spring sunshine, and his friends should see what a beautiful bride he had. He could imagine how her eyes would open at the beauties that he would show her; she loved old things, she had said. Why had he left so suddenly? Why had he separated himself from her on the very day after his declaration? He knew the answer; he could not trust himself to Di Torrenti knew the hot flush of his remain. blood and the passion of the old race in him. sat down at the table and put his head in his hands. After a second he took up pen and paper and began to write furiously. He filled page after page as only an Italian in love can do.

Cissy Porson of Wisconsin had never dreamed of such a love-letter; it was an intoxication; there were lyrics in it in honour of her—there was a ring in it, and a song all through.

Whilst Francesco wrote, his servant knocked at the door in vain. Finally the man called out, terrified:

'Signore, signore, che è, che è?' in a soft panic. And Francesco, mildly cursing him, opened the door, displaying his dishabille.

'It's past midnight,' said the man, 'and the carrozza is at the door for an hour.'

Francesco redressed and sighed:

'One is never too late at a ball.'

VIII

He came home from the ball on foot through the empty streets, where a few miserable ones crept out as he passed from their night shelters, whence the police had not yet routed them. The morning began to dawn, and in the cold sharp air the dampness turned to rain. The houses one by one came out grimly and forbidding, and as he passed them by there was not one that suggested to him a home for Cissy, not even the façade of his own, and before the door he lit a cigarette and paused. He didn't want to go inside. The loud clamours of the ball; the music, which had been quite mad this evening—a band of Hungarians fetched from Buda-Pesth to satisfy a fad of the Princess: the slipping of the feet over the polished floors; the rustle of the women's gowns: the greeting of his men friends, their anecdotes and the charm of his worldly associates, had rudely entered in upon his thoughts. A string had been severed, and he recognised the old force and familiar charm of the world. It hummed in his ears.

He didn't want to go up into the rooms he had left lately with the enchanted mood round him; he turned and went down the street to the riverside, quite to the edge of the bank, and so stood for a second looking over at the opposite shore. The Tiber flowed like liquid alabaster under the piers of the bridge and between the banks. Over yonder the churchly cypresses rose like spires in the grey light. Francesco could dimly discern the form of the Palace of the Cæsars and the soft, round velvet of the cedar plumes. Just below him was a boatman rocking in his boat, sitting huddled up asleep at the stern. Di Torrenti aroused him, and the man sprang up to swear; he raised his arm defiantly. The Duca showed him a gold piece, and said:

'Take me down the river a little way, will you? I'll get back again somehow.'

Once in the great bulky boat he drew his long cloak about him, and, sitting comfortably back, smoked and smoked, and smiled under his moustache, and hummed in his pleasant voice a few notes of the waltz which had been such a success at the ball. It had a pretty melody which remained to haunt and was easy to recall. The Princess had danced with him several times. Finally, he had escaped her for the rest of the evening. He had flirted with more than one of the women with whom he had danced during the soirée, but, nevertheless, the Princess had herself held him faithful for two years. She prided

herself on having made Di Torrenti's sentimental education, and never, so she told him, really let him go; she kept a ribbon round his wrist, she said; but, as far as he was concerned, he acknowledged no binding tie. The Princess Dolphini was not a woman to keep a man like him. He had never any wish to be faithful, never any wish domesticate and settle down-that is, he had not had until now; but he had changed, wonderfully changed. Would it be possible to keep up this sort of thing—to go on loving like this, to the exclusion of everything else? Why, the women had seemed dolls, with flower-faces, foolish, silly things, all of them, until he had known this young girl. And what was there in her to have chained his volatile fancy?

Underneath the boat the river flowed in twisting spirals; the vigorous current carried it along without much effort of the oars, the water itself milky and as soft as chalk, and round the island of St. Bartolommeo the waves surged up like snow. Francesco leaned forward on his knees, and looked over at the boatman. The fellow had a heavy face with brutal brows and fine eyes. He was looking straight in front of him, apparently quite unconscious of his patron. Francesco could not take his attention from him. There was something familiar about his features. Where had he seen him—or another man like him—before?

'Are you a Roman?' he asked abruptly.

The boatman started violently, as if he had been interrupted in a current of very absorbing thought. He stopped rowing, and said gruffly:

^{&#}x27;Yes; are you?'

Di Torrenti nodded, and said to himself: 'I don't believe him; he looks like a Neapolitan. If Birden's boatman is of this type he had better look out.' And the name of the boy crossing his thoughts fetched him back to Cissy. For some seconds he sat, his head lifted, dreaming, living over the past weeks again, his eyes resting on the shores and on the distant vision of the Campagna. The river swirled round them, the current noisy at the keel, and at Francesco's direction the boat put in towards the shore. As the man drew his barque up to a possible place where the young gentleman might land, he said at the water's edge:

'The Signorino, of course, knows all Rome?'

'More, by a great deal, than I want to, amico,' the Duke replied good-naturedly. 'What's the matter? Are you out of work? Do you want employment? What can I do for you?'

'Oh, I'm out of work,' nodded the other, 'but I shall have it when I find it, not before. And when I find it I shall be able to do it.'

Di Torrenti laughed and said he didn't doubt it.

'The Signorino, if he knew so much of Rome, perhaps knew a certain Duca di Torrenti?'

Francesco laughed, still looking at him intently.

The man, in order to draw his boat to land, had stepped into the water to his knees. The Duca sprang out, and they stood side by side on the rocky shore.

Yes, he knew the name well. It was not a hard one to find in Rome.

The fisherman supposed not. He took his cap off, and ran his brown fingers through his hair. It was black hair and curly; his forehead was whiter than

his tanned dark face, and had a girlish look about the brow and ears. Francesco, as he looked at him, paled, and his lips parted as if to ask a question; but the man who was speaking went on to tell him in a natural, easy manner that he had some little business with the young duke, a message from a boatman whom he used to employ at Capri.

'But they tell me,' he went on to say '—for I have asked—that the Duca is away from home on a voyage.'

Francesco gathered himself together in a moment, and it was not the man that he saw, nor his grave, threatening face, nor his great hands busy with the boat, but a woman whose brow and ears and hair were like to the boatman's. She seemed to stand by her brother's side, and her face was as white as the dead. Francesco had never seen this man before in his life; he had not been at the island in the Capri days. He put his hand again into his pockets and drew out twenty lira, a second gold piece.

'If you're out of work, my friend,' he said easily, 'let these help you until you find what you are looking for.'

The man thanked him, put the money into his pocket, and, in spite of the fact that the sum was more than he could have made in a month, he did not seem moved by the munificence.

'How will the Signorino get back to Rome?' he asked.

'Oh, I'll walk,' his patron told him. 'And you—what are you going to do?'

The man shrugged. Oh, he would row back; he had been well paid; he didn't care if it took all day.

As the young man left him the sun was rising. He walked up from the riverside into the light. At the top of the bank some spirit of mockery, some humour stranger than his more serious feeling, made him stop to call back:

'If I see the Duca I will tell him.'

The man raised his hand:

'No, no, grazie, I'll tell him—I'll tell him. He's sure to turn up some day.'

'Oh, yes,' the young man called back cordially. 'He's sure to turn up. Addio!'

IX

Di Torrenti had never shut himself up like a hermit before. Since he had finished his studies with the Dominican fathers he had not seen so much of the inside of a house. It pleased him to make himself a prisoner, and so to wait until the letter he had sent out to the Villa Maggiore should elicit a response from his father, or until his father—which he thought was not unlikely—should come in himself to see him. From the time when he ran up the Tiber bank away from the boatman, vaguely making for the northern part of the city, until the following week, he never left the palazzo. He smoked and read, and smoked and played on the great organ set in the chapel walls, sat up well into the nights, slept late into the mornings. No one knew that he was in Rome, no one disturbed him, and the post with its social demands, its invitations, letters, and bills, lay untouched upon his table. But Cissy wrote him a little daily letter, in a round

firm hand something like a boy's, with black ink on thick paper, and these were all that interested the Italian in the way of letters. The little missives, the time he gave to reading them, to answering them, the fashion in which he tuned them to memories of his own, wrote of them and through them and over them, and noted and underscored and brought out of the simple fragments of girlish words wonders of prose and verse, can only be explained by the fact that somewhere far back in his line was a not inconsiderable poet. He made sonnets for Cissy, and lyrics and songs. Many of his own letters he did not dare to send, but he wrote them and addressed them, and with an unusual delicacy for an Italian in love he spared the young girl the reading of his passionate love-making. Those letters which he did send, chastened as they seemed to his view, fetched the bright blood to her face, and made her breath catch in her throat. The others, in the box where he put them, with a picture of himself as a little boy, and a picture of his mother in her girlhood-Cissy has them all. The box is of curious lacquer with a great deal of gold shining through the brown. and a picture, a view of Capri taken from the sea, on the lid.

On the fourth day of his seclusion, the Marchese forced the *consigne* and came in determinedly upon Di Torrenti as he sat at his table writing.

'Dio mio!' exclaimed the little man. 'If I hadn't got in I should have climbed St. Peter's and barked from the dome.'

Francesco greeted him with more or less effusion.

'But, now that you have come,' he said, laughing, 'I see that I am glad to see you, but I would not

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have believed it if you had forced me to say so. I'm not at home. Who let you in?'

'Never mind, caro. I'm too kind to tell on him. But what in Heaven's name has happened to you? Your hair is long and your beard's grown out, and I don't believe you've even bathed. You're mediæval. What are you doing here, and alone? Aren't you going to the reception at the Embassy?'

Di Torrenti put up his hand and shook his head.

'Listen,' he said eagerly, bending over his paper.
'You saw her?'

The Marchese threw himself down on a little divan, the one luxury of Francesco's room, stretched his legs out, and lit a cigarette. 'Poverino,' he sighed, 'yes, I saw her.'

Francesco nodded.

'Well, well?'

'I had great difficulty in picking her out at Bertolini's. They're all so ridiculously alike, you know; no shape, no colour, no clothes.'

'Oh!' cried Francesco.

'But I found her—and how do you suppose?'

'By her eyes,' cried the other; 'by her beauty.'

The Marchese laughed.

'By her brother—by that brutal, sulky chap you told me of. Non è simpatico, that boy.'

Francesco's eyes were so intently on him that it drew the fat little man to more serious attention, and he smiled humanly.

'You seem to be waiting for something, Cecco.'

'Yes, yes,' urged the other. 'You saw her?'

'They're all alike, these Americans,' repeated the nobleman, 'all on one scheme, and such a jumble of traits, such taste!'

Francesco did not appear to hear him.

'Where were they? Where was she?'

'Taking tea in the Pavilion—at least the respected family were; the woman, the big man, and the terrible boy. She—your *fiancle*, was standing looking out at the view, I suppose.'

Francesco still waited.

The Marchese sat up a little.

'But, look here, my dear chap, you're not really serious, are you?'

The young man did not answer him at once. He contented himself with simply returning the other's gaze, and the Marchese saw his friend's face grow pale, and out of it the great dark eyes shone like stars. The young Italian got up and, walking over to the window which gave on to the Tiber side, looked out on to the river and the shore. When he came back the Marchese had lighted a fresh cigarette.

'I love her,' he said, looking down at the other man. 'Do you know what those words mean?'

The other shrugged gently as though he would not claim too nice a knowledge.

'I love her,' Francesco repeated, 'as a man loves his salvation——' he broke off. 'But why am I telling you?' he cried out violently, and before he could follow up his sudden outbreak the Roman said smoothly:

'Because I'm your friend, and because I have seen her.'

The other quieted immediately and breathed:

'Yes, you saw her yesterday.'

The Italian turned his cigarette between his fingers. 'She is a pretty little child, Cecco,' he said,

'a pretty little creature, and I may as well give you the small news I have. She's really lovely, lovely—and I must confess that even her dress was bien comprise. I have been told by the porter that they are nice people, that the father is an industrial, and that he owns all the forests of the other hemisphere. It's hard to believe that, but still he must have a tree here and there, and I should advise him, between you and me, to send that savage boy of his out there to cut them down.'

'Lovely!' exclaimed Francesco, who had only heard the adjective applied to Cissy. 'Why, she has the face of a rose, the shape of a nymph! She will set Rome mad—mad!'

The Marchese smiled.

'She has made one Roman so,' he said; 'don't you think you could go and take a bath and shave, Cecco?'

The Duca sat down more peacefully in a chair by the side of his friend.

'I'm expecting a messenger from the Villa Maggiore, and I have been attending to some affairs, some things that have been dragging along—looking over my papers, making calculations, for marriage is a serious thing, you know.'

'Far, far too serious,' replied the other. 'I've never thought of it. Do come out with me for luncheon and we'll go afterwards to the Pincio. The Princess Dolphini will be there.'

His friend shook his head.

'You go,' he said, 'and don't breathe of my existence to any one in Rome. I want to be alone.'

As the Marchese left, as he shook his friend's hand

on leaving, Francesco asked: 'You really then found her lovely?'

- 'Oh, very!' said the other.
- 'And she stood,' pursued the lover, 'looking out at the view.'
- 'Like this,' illustrated the Marchese, wheeling round and turning his plump face to the Tiber.
- 'She was looking towards Rome?' said Francesco eagerly. 'She was not thinking of the others.'
- 'I don't blame her for that. I wish I could forget them, especially the cub.'

As he walked along the Corso, on the sunny side of the street, with his brisk little step, the Marchese murmured: 'Qu'il est bête après tout—qu'il est bête, l'homme qui est vraiment amoureux.'

X

The fact that he took to going about after sundown, walking along the quays and keeping as far away as possible from the Pincio and Corso, and that he strolled along at nightfall, choosing any of the out-of-the-way places rather than the frequented streets, proved that the Roman was at least not afraid of the boatman. It also proved that he was entirely indifferent to his health; and although the Neapolitan came sometimes to his mind, he thrust the ugly remembrance of him away, as was his custom when anything annoying crossed his path. But his going out at night in response to a need for exercise which his strong, lithe body demanded did him no good, for, after an evening passed in happy meditation in the Coliseum, he returned to the

palaszo with a touch of fever which kept him in bed for the next few days. Fortunately it was not serious, but the cold which followed it was a bad one and secluded him still further, and his spirits, so he said, fell a hundred feet, and he didn't scowl at his man when the following day he let the Marchese in again.

After scolding furiously and fuming, and writing out various little remedies in purple ink from a gold stylographic pen, and calling Vincenzo and giving him a hundred valuable directions, with as many flashing gestures when his rings and his cuff buttons and his teeth all flashed together, the Marchese sank down in a chair by the young man's couch.

'Madre mia,' he breathed, 'you'll be the death of me, Francesco.'

In his short illness Francesco had grown thin, and his eyes seemed abnormally large. They rested on the Marchese with an appeal in their fine depths.

'Don't,' he said with singular intensity, 'fetch the word death in here, please.'

He drew his dressing-gown close up to his chin, and his dark, charming face peered above the collar.

'I have a stupid feeling, somehow, that---'

'Già, già!' cried the other, 'you've bred all sorts of maggots here in this solitude. You'll find stupid ideas enough if you sit out alone on Roman ruins all night. Come, stupido poverino!'

'Oh, it's not the ruins or the cold,' said Francesco, 'it's something else.'

'So you see things as well?' nodded the other.

'Listen,' demanded the young man, rising a little, and looking about him as if to be sure that no one heard him. 'Listen, caro mio; if ever a ghost

walked, one has walked here. Don't for a moment think that I've been as mad a lover all these days as I seemed. For the last forty-eight hours I've been haunted.'

'Ecco,' nodded the Neapolitan, who had a glass of Marsala at his elbow and some sweet biscuits which he melted like a schoolboy in his wine. 'You've got a bad digestion as well as several other things, my poor Francesco. And since you won't have a doctor, you should have dined with me at the club last night. It would have set you up. You must have shocking things to eat here. There were Parisian soles soaked to their fins in white wine.'

Francesco interrupted him.

'I'm not sorry that you forced yourself in here to-day, old chap, for really there are a lot of things I would like to tell you if you could only be serious for a second.'

The Marchese drained his little glass and wiped his lips, smiling enchantingly.

'You were telling me of nightmares,' he remarked, 'and I'll admit that they are serious; but then they are short-winded too, thank God!'

'I was telling you,' said Francesco, leaning on one elbow and fixing his friend, 'of nothing less than of a ghost that walks here, my dear friend—at all events, walked here last night.' Francesco put his hand on the other's arm to accentuate the importance of what he said.

'My dear boy,' murmured his friend, smiling, 'was it a lady?'

Francesco exclaimed violently:

'Dio mio, what a scatterbrain—what a rattlebox!'
But the other said more kindly:

'Go on, then, Cecco; I'll be good, my dear fellow. What have you to say of the phantom?'

'It was a woman,' said the Roman, 'and she passed through my room and put her hand on my forehead as I lay there, wakeful and feverish, and bent over me.'

The Marchese bit his lip and retained the amusing phrase that his friend's narrative suggested to him, only muttering under his breath:

'Extraordinary, extraordinary!'

- 'Yes,' said the young fellow, 'very! She came, she bent over me.'
- 'You must see the doctor, Cecco,' said the other, stirring uneasily.
- 'No,' said Francesco quietly, 'but I was determined to see her, so I turned the lights on.'
 - 'She didn't vanish as ghosts do?'
 - 'She stood there.'
 - 'Well?' replied the other, 'well?'
- 'Why, nothing,' said Francesco with an effort; but I knew her—I knew her!' He got up from the sofa where he had been lying and walked in his soft slippers up and down the room, his hands in his dressing-gown pockets. Finally stopping at the divan's side, he said: 'Now what I want to find out, my dear man, is how Marina Pesca died.'

The guest gave a little start.

- 'Ah!' he nodded—'that Capri girl! I hope to Heaven she is dead, though.'
- 'I've been told that she is dead,' said Francesco, 'and that she died of grief.'

The other suggested that it was a ruse.

Francesco shook his head.

'The woman that I saw last night, at all events,

was dead,' he said with great solemnity, 'and she had been drowned. She stood there with the weeds in her hands, and the water dripping from her face and her dress.' After a second he added: 'It was so real that I looked on the floor after she had gone to see if it were not wet. I looked on my pillow to see if her damp hand had not left its mark there—but there was nothing. Now,' he said, 'I want to know how Marina died.'

The poor Marchese was as uncomfortable as it was possible for a man to be. He was superstitious, as are all Italians. He dreaded death and illness; and the close room, the dark, sunless day, all combined to cast a cloud over his joyous nature, and his friend's words struck him cold. With an exclamation of horror he sprang up from the sofa.

'Look here,' he said almost sternly, 'you've got to get out of this morbid place, Di Torrenti. I shall send the doctor in and insist on his seeing you. If you don't see him I'll telegraph to your father; and you must have some good food too. I'm going to send a dinner in from the club, and if you're not reasonable to-morrow I'll send for that little Miss Porsonni—I will, by Heaven!'

He danced about like a marmoset, knocking over the wine-glass, that rolled about on the polished floor.

At the sight of this excitement Francesco laughed and his face cleared.

'You're right, as usual,' he said; 'of course I'll see the doctor, and do come back to-night and eat with me, old man. Order a good dinner from the club—plenty of champagne—and to-morrow I'll break this dream—this dream,' he repeated. He

threw his hands above his head with a gesture as if he would exorcise the painful impression he had made, and extended his hand cordially to his friend. 'Promise me to come back, Giorgio.'

- 'Yes, yes, I'll come back. We'll dine at eight?'
- 'Of course, at eight.'
- 'And you don't want some other man to make a third?'
- 'Heavens!' exclaimed the other, 'no one but you—remember, I trust you.'
- 'Very well, very well,' hurried the Marchese, who was getting out of the room as fast as he could.

As briskly as his fat legs would take him he left the *palasso* and drew a good breath only when at length in the street.

'What an experience!' he muttered. 'What a cold shiver he gave me! And how, poor dear, he has gone off in forty-eight hours. What a singular way to take a love affair—shut up to moon and stare, to haunt ruins at night, to catch cold and see ghosts! Ugh!'

As he mused, he passed a big flower-shop, and the sight of the roses brought a look of relief and pleasure to his face. He went brightly in and gave his card with the name of the Princess de Senneta. His humour had returned, and his normal good spirits. He was to lunch with the Princess, and afterwards he would tell her, as he was doing every day, how he adored her, how beautiful she was; and, after that, he would beg of her to grant him a rendezvous at the rooms which for some time had been ready for her.

This was love! This was sensible and delightful! If the Princess should accord him his wish and by

any chance decide on to-night, why, Di Torrenti would eat his ghoulish supper alone. But, true to his promise, the Roman went into the restaurant of his club and ordered the promised dinner.

'It is really a little too much,' he told himself, 'to be asked to dine with a lady who has drowned herself for the love of another man. It's not gay—not gay at all!' he repeated.

XI

The Marchese left Francesco with his hand on the open door and a smile on his face. It was so unnatural for him to be either morose or sombre that sadness altered his whole physical appearance.

'Cerco il sole,' he mused, and felt the place on his finger where the ring used to be; he had given it to Cissy. Then he turned about to dress and to transform himself into an ordinary human being. As he passed his dressing-table the letters which accumulated day by day caught his eye, and he looked them through, to discover something for which he had waited for days—a letter from the family; but it was in another handwriting than his father's, and in this way had slipped his attention. It was from his young sister, Elenna, a lovely little creature about to be married to the Duca Darezzo.

'Caro,' it ran, 'the father hurt his hand whilst pigeon-shooting at the country club here, and he can't write you. Mother has had a week of migraine, for it's been raining like cats and dogs, so I'm going to write for them to you, caro.

'We none of us really know what to say to you. You have so many affairs always, and you've such a

big heart, and you're so sweet. Father says that if this is a fancy, it will pass, and he wants you to take a month to think it over, and to come out here and see us. Mother sends a thousand kisses, and she refuses you nothing, but she doesn't like Americans—they are so fantastic in the Vatican. I say——'

Evidently here she had been interrupted, for she went on again with a different-coloured ink:

'I say, caro, do come out and see my new dogs. Pio has given them to me, and I've a new ring from father. As for the rest, of course we shall all love her if you do, but we say wait, wait a bit and come here. Kisses.

ELENNA.'

Francesco saw that no one had taken his letter as he intended that it should be taken. After all, he could scarcely wonder. What pages and chapters of affairs they had all known him to go through since his studies had set him free! No one had ever found fault with him in his life. The old Duca had himself been a free-liver, and he had never seen fit to sermonise his son. His mother was a gentle goose, and he made up for all his delinquencies, as far as she was concerned, by kisses. Elenna had her friends, her dogs, and a fiance; but he knew that they would all welcome her when he should take Cissy there at last. This was not a formal answer to his letter, however, and he could not see the Porsons until he had obtained one. He wrote again, at length, like a man, like a determined one, and sent for his own servant and bade him take the first train to the Villa Maggiore, and wait at the house for an answer and bring it back with him. The servant informed him that it would leave the Duca very much alone, as there was no one in the palazzo

beside the major-domo and a couple of cooks, but this made no difference to Francesco, and he packed Vincenzo off post-haste.

After his departure, the Duca could not get himself up to the dressing-point, beyond taking a bath and slipping into fresh clothes. He refused any further concessions to toilet than his dressing-gown, a dark velvet affair, tied round the waist with a silken cord. He sent for his coiffeur, however, and was shaved. And then, exhausted from the effort, he threw himself down to rest and to muse in the stillness of his quiet room. The walls round him were lined with his books, fencing foils, and hunting It was distinctly a man's room, not in the least a fop's. As his eyes traversed the walls, he let the objects suggest the different times of his life when he had hunted in the marshes of Maremma, or even gone further north with English friends to Scotland. As he looked, his attention was caught by an oar lying up underneath the frieze of the ceiling. As he looked at it he paled; his heart beat furiously. He stared, fascinated, at the object. He could not remember it at all; he could not remember ever having valued it as a trophy of sport, but it hung there long and slim and slender, painted blue with brown handle. It was the oar of a simple fishing-boat, and as he considered it, Francesca found that he remembered it very well.

The figure of Marina Pesca came forcibly to him, as clearly as if she had been with him all the time. Her presence laid fast hold upon him; as clearly as though she stood before him he saw her face. She was a fine creature, with splendid shoulders and neck, a swelling bosom that showed beneath her half-open

shirt waist; and his head had lain there many times—too many times! Her eyes were superb and very melancholy; her lips red and full, and her hair soft as dark velvet. Her hands, spoiled by hard work, fishing and cleansing fish, and washing, contrasted with her beautiful arms—and he knew all their caresses, he had known them too many times!

Francesco had rowed her out in her boat with the blue oars. She had rowed him with them, and he had often threatened to steal one and keep it in memory of her. Evidently he had done so, for there it was now on his wall. He couldn't remember having ordered it to be sent to Rome, but he must have done so in some hour of ecstatic folly, at some time when he was carried away by his mistress. He had not loved Marina as he loved Cissy, but he had loved her very much indeed; she had appealed to him to such an extent that, as he told the Marchese, he would have married her. As the clear image of her remained before him, in a second he was transported back to Capri. He knew all the stones of the beach by heart, and it was no difficult thing to fancy once again the little cottage up in the hills where he had taken her and kept her for six wild weeks, leaving her at length in a daze with a promise to see her again, to return soon. She had never known his name, and how her brother had discovered it Francesco wondered in vain. It was no use for him to invoke the image of Cissy—she wouldn't come to him—she wouldn't come to him! But Marina stayed. Indeed, she stood there by the wall under the oar and bent her melancholy eyes on the young man. Tears seemed to stream from them until they drowned her, drowned her—then finally she disappeared.

With an imprecation Francesco sprang up. A flood of blood rushed to his heart—his temples beat. He leaned out of the window, which he threw open to the dark night. The evening had come and gone. It was late, and he had been unaware of the time. But, nevertheless, in the darkness, he realised it with horror—he had been able clearly to see Marina and the oar on the wall. Well, she was gone, at any rate. What a fool he was—what a fool! He drew himself in from the window, shut it, turned the lights on, and rang his bell. After a little his old maggiordomo arrived, shuffling in.

'What time is it, Matteo?'

'Seven o'clock, Signorino, and a dinner—such a dinner, has come in from the club—enough for an army, and wine and ice.'

The Duca told him to serve in the red salon downstairs, to make a good fire; he could not stay another moment in his rooms.

'But,' urged the old man, 'the Signorino would be seriously ill with the cold.'

The Signorino would take the risk. Meanwhile, he would write some letters. Come up and tell him as soon as the room was heated through, and fetch him the evening papers.

The bright friendly light filled the room now, and after the old man had gone out Francesco sat down before his writing things and covered with his hand the little packet of letters from Cissy which lay arranged before him. Defiantly he looked up at the oar as if to let it do its gruesome work. He was not afraid of it any more, his ridiculous fever had made him almost delirious. He had smoked—he had drunk too much coffee—too much vermouth,

alone here with his fancies. Couldn't a man's follies, the natural follies of his youth, die and leave him at peace? Why, his score was nothing compared with that of his different friends—to Pio Darezzo, for instance. And certainly Pio was free from spooks. It was ridiculous to dwell on the past—it was gone, irrevocable, and he was alive still. And so was Cissy Porson! He looked up at the old oar which he had evidently, without remembering it, brought to Rome. He looked up to it, and it was gone. Above his foils and his masks the red line of the wall extended between the ceiling and the frieze—quite bare. There was no oar there—there never had been any oar there.

XII

'But you don't think we are not going to see it, do you?' asked Mr. Porson. 'Why, Cissy and I can't find a road on a map that doesn't lead to Rome, can we, little girl? And as far as this Sicily is concerned——'

'Well, it's the sea,' said his wife plaintively, 'and if it were in a teacup, it's too much for me. I've got to cross the ocean, I expect, to get back to Wisconsin, but I'm not going to risk it before, and if you go to Sicily, you'll have to leave me here, father. Bird can take care of me, I guess.'

Mr. Porson said 'Huh!' and pushed his maps away.

'I've always thought it would be nice to see the Pope,' Mrs. Porson went on, 'and the Catacombs, and I shan't try to look at anything else, or be much trouble. But I believe I'd feel more cheerful if I

thought we were actually doing some of the things we had planned out.'

No one spoke to remind her that the delays had been wholly for her sake.

'I feel more bright to-day.' She settled her hair with her sharp, nervous fingers. 'I think I could get on to-morrow if Louise could pack up.'

Porson looked over at his daughter, on whose face he expected to see the reflection of his own disappointment, for he wanted to go to Sicily, but Cissy, on the contrary, was radiant.

'Oh, we'd better all hang together,' he said cheerfully. 'I'll wire for rooms to the Grand. We'll have to look up another courier when we get to Rome and begin sight-seeing all over again, but I don't believe we'll ever find another Francesco.'

Birden grumbled something about hoping to thunder they wouldn't, and Mrs. Porson's thin voice finished his growl.

'There was something awfully queer about that man, father. I never felt easy with him, and you never looked up one of his references. Now, if we get a new courier in Rome, you'll have to take him from Cook's or from the hotel.'

Still looking at his daughter closely, Porson said:

'I've never heard a word from him since I paid him up. I asked him to drop me a line.'

Cissy smiled into the clear eyes of her father and said nothing. She had close in the bosom of her dress a letter from Rome from the Palazzo di Torrenti. It was signed 'Francesco.' She was not anxious about his silence, but she wished from her heart that she might tell her father.

'You'd just as soon go to Rome as to Sicily by

the sea, wouldn't you, Cissy?' asked her father, and Cissy assured him that she would just as soon.

Naples had become to Cissy the emptiest of empty shells. A still perfectly beautiful thing, of course—Europe was too lovely—but on the lifelessness of those flower-filled streets the sun shone with unusual fidelity, though it might have rained in torrents for all she knew. Relics of dead cities, the broken, empty forms of what was once perfection, were all she could think of when she thought at all of Naples, in which she had been left too suddenly alone.

The Marchese had said that Miss Porson stood in Bertolini's looking out at the view. And so for the most of the time she did, a pathetic, lonely little figure in the big glass pavilion, her blue eyes fixed on Naples as it lay along the shore. One by one, out from it all the roads led towards Rome. And it was not the Neapolitan town that Cissy looked down upon, but the capital about which hitherto she had talked so little, and which became for her the centre of the earth. Francesco's letters set her imagination rioting, and she built palace after palace with curious facility for a little girl who had never been before across the frontier of a Western State. Cicero might never have recognised the Rome of Cissy Porson's construction, but it possessed walls, gardens. and monuments in profusion, and in the centre the Palazzo di Torrenti stood up like a new Golden House. And Cissy's heart was there. If Cicero or Cæsar would have lost themselves in those city streets, it is safe to say that any lover would have found his way about. Francesco's letters she read so long and so far into the night that her sleeplessness

began to prey upon her good looks, and these letters held her fancies, for now and then the young man told her what his beautiful prison looked like, and she felt a sort of terror at the vast, sumptuous beauty that he described. Their own house in Wisconsin was a big, generous, luxurious dwelling, with five bath-rooms and two parlours, and Mrs. Porson was going to enlarge it as soon as she got home. Her father had already ordered, boxed, and sent four gigantic terra-cotta pots to set in his new gardens; but although it was the handsomest residence in La Crosse, she knew that her home was far from being a palace.

Cissy, bending her pretty head and looking down on Naples, and through it and over it at Rome. which she so charmingly and naïvely saw, longed and wished. 'Shall I see him as soon as we get Is his house near the Hôtel de Russie? there? Will his father say yes? And when can I tell father? Soon, I hope.' And it was with this hope that she one day turned about and met the eyes of the Marchese de Silveria fixed upon her, and under his curious eyes she had blushed and frowned. The Marchese, to whom beauty was enhanced by life and experience, and who had, so he said, no understanding and no digestion for les fruits crus, thought her only a pretty child with possibilities, and he was quite willing to leave her development to his friend.

XIII

The old circular room in which Matteo had seen fit to prepare his master's dinner was hung about with twelfth-century tapestry. Seven high silver

candelabra at the chimney-places and about the room lit the apartment, and the pale radiance trembled on the air, which was still chilly, for no matter how the fire roared the room had been too long cold. Matteo had laid a small round table in the centre of the apartment, placed two great candlesticks upon it, and arranged his master's dinner as temptingly as he knew how to do. There was plenty of time before the Marchese should come. The champagne was iced, and the baskets piled high with fruits.

The major-domo in his best regalia stood waiting until his master's friend should arrive. But the Marchese not appearing, the host, nervous and impatient, chatting with the old servant, found that the menu sounded sumptuously good, and that for the first time in many days he was hungry. He drew a long sigh of pleasure at the cheerfulness of the room, helped Matteo to place a huge log across the andirons, and continued to wait and listen for Giorgio to call out, as he always did before he appeared: 'Well, what is there new in the world, Cecco?' But the happy Giorgio was at that moment supping with his Princess, and had forgotten even to send a note to his poor friend.

At nine o'clock, taking his desertion as goodnaturedly as possible, Francesco sat down before his lonely supper, and bade the man serve him without further delay. The Duca was half disposed to bid the domestic call up his own club by telephone and see who of his acquaintance might chance to be hanging about. But he called Matteo in vain, for the servant, who was in the distant part of the palace, heard nothing. Di Torrenti sat down to the table where at his place the little tureen of soup was steaming. He poured out a glass of wine that filled the crystal like amber. He had specially ordered this wine, for it was a favourite of the Marchese's, of peculiarly rich and delicious vintage. He drank it down at one draught, and the warmth of it ran through his veins as if it were the sun itself. Francesco sat immobile, looking across the room as if he had been suffused by an elixir.

'Innamorata mia!'

And then he heard a step on the outer corridor; the curtain stirred, it was lifted by some one's hand.

Di Torrenti sprang up, certain that he would come face to face with the Marchese, but, on the contrary, a woman entered, a little cloaked figure with one pretty hand extended, and in another moment, with a cry as though seven devils had been exorcised from him by the sight of her, Di Torrenti had Cissy Porson in his arms.

She rested there for a second, then made him release her, and he saw how she had flushed, and how her lips trembled, and as he realised how wonderful it was to see her, he also realised how young she was, and how she wavered and swayed like a flower. But he could only repeat her name, holding both her little hands: 'Cissy, Cissy!' gazing at her as if she were a miracle. It was evident that the girl made a great effort to find her voice.

'Why, everybody comes to Rome, you know,' she said, 'don't they? We are tourists, you know; we had to come, and I had to see a palace.'

^{&#}x27;Who is with you, dearest?'

'No one,' she said simply.

'But how did you get here all alone so late, and who knows you are here? But it's a dream—a dream!' he repeated, and raising one of her hands he kissed it so long that she paled afresh and said his name like an appeal.

'It's a long story and a romantic one. May I sit down in your palace, or could I possibly have some of your dinner, Francesco? I'm hungry, and I've had nothing to eat since noon.'

He cried out, put a chair for her, put a great velvet cushion at her feet, on which her little shoe rested like the shoe of the princess in a fairy tale, and served her himself, asking her a hundred questions eagerly at all of which she only laughed and told him to wait.

- 'Who let you in?'
- 'An old man, an adorable old man.'

'Matteo, of course. Well, you've bewitched him. Where is he?' And again Francesco called 'Matteo,' violently ringing the bell. And this time, with surprising alacrity, as though he had been just within the tapestried curtain, which now was intensely and properly immovable, the man came in and received his orders.

The Signorina was to share the Duca's dinner, and she was to eat and drink of the best—the best! More wood was to be thrown on the fire, and everything was to be done *presto—presto*.

Ah, the subtle old Italian understood; he smiled wisely, not ill-pleased that his master had become a human being again. This he knew would chase the blue fiends from the young man's brain.

Francesco leaned his elbow on the table, feasting

his eyes on the girl. She had thrown off her long travelling cloak, which had given her the air of a cloaked fairy, and she wore a simple blouse and skirt, with a soft little collar about her neck and a soft little hat on her head.

'Tell me all,' he said. 'Where are your people?'

'Why, they've gone to Tivoli, and they think that I am at home in the hotel. Bird found his boatman here in Rome yesterday, and he has taken him out to row on the Tiber. He was very nice and obliging, really not dreadful at all: I saw him myself. He's a handsome fellow, and looks quite the Italian that one sees painted on the tambourines. He pointed out lots of things on the shores, for I went with my brother. And when we passed a certain spot he said, "There's the Palazzo di Torrenti." And you can guess how I felt. He said it over and over again, and finally I asked him if he had ever been there, and he said with a great deal of feeling, "Not yet, but I am going some day." Then I found your letter at the hotel telling me how ill you had been, and that you would still keep the house for several days. My family had gone when the post arrived.' She bent her naïve, innocent eyes upon him. 'And, of course, as soon as I knew that you were ill, I came at once.'

- 'But who fetched you through the streets at night?'
 She laughed securely.
- 'Why, an American girl can go anywhere. I came alone in a cab.'
 - 'Did you keep the vettura?'
- 'At the door I only asked how you were, you know, to find out; but my Italian wasn't very good, I'm afraid, for the man fetched me right in. He kept

telling me all the time that you were solo, molto solo. Are you?'

The young man could neither drink nor eat, hungry as he had been before. He could only listen entranced to the gentle, simple words as if they were music, cool enough to marvel at the code of education which had made a nocturnal visit to him possible without ruffling her peace. At every word he drank in like a draught of pure air and pure water her frank, innocent words, and her innocent love.

With the greatest effort and coaxing on his part he forced her to eat something, but they were neither of them equal to the Marchese's banquet, and Matteo, scolding in a mild and deferential fashion, carried the scarcely-tasted supper away.

'Sit here, Cacilia mia.' Francesco led her to a long seat covered in brocade near the fire, and yet out of the light. 'Sit here and let me tell myself over and over again that I am not asleep, for in a very little while I must take you home.'

She acquiesced, saying she could only stay a moment, but that old Matteo should take her home, for she would not hear of Francesco leaving the house. It was cold and chilly outside.

She touched his hand gently. Had he fever? Had he been very ill?

Cissy, looking like a child, sat among the pillows of the long brocaded seat. Back of her head ran a story of the Middle Ages in the woven silks of the tapestries, and at her side branched out the silver arms of the candelabra.

'This is a palace,' she said under her breath, 'and I should think it was. There's nothing like it in our country, and it's too beautiful for words.'

'You find it well?' he asked the little Westerner with as much deference as though he had been the geni who had made it spring into existence solely to give her pleasure.

'Oh, I think it's wonderful!'

'It's for you,' he said devotedly, 'all for you; all the rooms and the treasures, and there are really many. All, all.'

The girl in the corner of the divan smiled rather timidly. The immensity of the emotions already evoked by the existence of the man at her side were as much as her young heart could bear.

'It will be yours,' he said, 'and you will make my home beautiful. You will be its queen.'

Tears sprang to Cissy's eyes. She put her hand out in protest.

'Oh, don't! I'd rather not hear such things: they frighten me.' She leaned forward, speaking with difficulty, controlling what might well have been a burst of weeping. 'I cared, you know, when I thought you were poor. I'd just as soon—it's only you who matter. I don't know but that I would rather have you poor. This frightens me.'

He thought, as he looked at her, so small and sensitive, of the Lord of Burleigh, and how the lady had pined and died. Under his breath, his hand over her trembling hand, he told her how adorable she was, how he couldn't live in a palace or a cottage without her, and assured her that, as she had said, it was only each other that mattered at all. 'How is it,' he cried, 'that you have waited for me, Cæcilia?'

She took courage to laugh back at him.

'I am only eighteen, anyway, you know; that's not very long to wait.'

'Only eighteen? What a woman!' he said, more soberly. 'What a woman you are, and yet what a child!'

She nodded.

'Yes, if you had come a year ago you would have found me with my books in school. I'm afraid I didn't learn much out of them. I've really only learned and lived since I've come to the Old World. What were you doing a year ago, Francesco? Where were you?'

Where was he?

Oh, he told her that he had not been born then, that he had only lived in reality a few weeks. And rising, he changed the subject, said that he must put her cloak about her, that it was cold in spite of the fire. Roman palaces were very cold places, even if they were beautiful.

She obediently climbed down from the divan and he fastened the cloak about her neck.

'Aren't you curious about the old house? Wouldn't you like to see some of the rooms?'

Without waiting for her to answer he opened the door of the next apartment, lighting it himself with the candle which he held above his head, and passed with her into the farther suite, watching the slender figure as it followed at his side with almost a superstitious fear lest she might vanish before his eyes. But Cissy, as a cold blast blew at them from one of the icy chambers, drew Francesco back. It was too cold to venture in, she said, and it took little to dissuade him. The candle itself had been blown out by the draught, and as he followed her back into the warmer room the first sensation of life and warmth that he had known for days came to

him, and he caught her by the hand, and told her in answer to her unasked question:

'Yes, I have been ill, wretchedly ill, and in a way possessed. But it's all over now. To-morrow my messenger to Maggiore will come back and I shall have my father's answer and will be able to tell your family. Only,' he went on more seriously, 'what would they say to me, all of them, if they knew that I had kept you here one moment?'

The young girl shook her head, smiling.

'Mother would be frightened; she thinks Rome is full of cheats and beggars, and she is Protestant—she doesn't approve of the Pope. Father wouldn't say anything—he never does to me. And as for Bird——'

Francesco interrupted her with his mellow laugh.

'Oh, if we've come down to him,' he exclaimed, 'I think we can let the question rest! At any rate, you have cured me like a clever little doctor, and I must take you home.'

Cissy might have been pardoned if she thought him cold all of a sudden, and changed, for he spoke with something not far from indifference. The truth of the matter was that Francesco, with every chivalrous and noble sentiment of which he was master, was endeavouring to remember the girl's innocence, her unprotected innocence, and to forget himself.

Cissy said firmly:

'But it's out of the question for you to leave the house. Your voice is still hoarse, and your hand'—for she had it at her cheek to feel its temperature—'is still hot.'

'I'll send Matteo then,' he consented reluctantly, 'and I shall only breathe when he comes back and

brings me news of you.' Turning from her he went over to the chimney-piece and pulled the long bell-rope that hung at the side. Neither of them could hear the tone which was supposed to ring out in some far-off part of the palazzo.

Cissy, in the centre of the room, stood peacefully, her grey cloak falling a little off her shoulders. The simple blouse, her short walking skirt, her dark little hat with the trailing veil round it—a small, foreign American figure, to all intents a barbarian, in the centre of the traditions of the mellow Old World. The candles threw long shades across the polished floor, and her own shadow fell alongside of Francesco's, his tall and slender, hers slender and small. But there were currents in the air, and there was a delicious sensuousness about the ethereal, spiritual little beauty. She was more material than the shadows.

Under Cissy's hat her hair came in sparkling little strands; her cheeks were of a beautiful carmine, and as the Italian looked at her, the charm she breathed, the woman she was, and the love for him that stirred her breast, spoke to him above all the more reasonable voices of his mind. He said:

'Carissima mia, Matteo does not reply. I can't imagine what is the matter with him. He has surely not gone off and deserted me and you.'

'Oh, he'll come presently,' she assured him. 'Are you tired of me so soon?'

'If it were not for the world do you think I'd ever let you go?'

With innocent ignorance of how tempting she was, 'The world,' she assured him, 'can neither see nor hear us in this old tapestried room.'

He caught her hands and cried:

'Do you mean it? Do you mean it, dearest?'

'Why,' she said gently, meeting his eyes, 'we can wait for Matteo, can't we? We've not seen each other for such a long, long while.'

Francesco went over to the fire and built it up. He drew a long log over with difficulty and placed it across the dogs, jabbing into the burning wood, scattering the sparks and starting the glowing blaze, his dark figure standing out against the light as he bent. When he rose Cissy was standing near him with her hands clasped before her.

'You can't think how I want to tell my father, Francesco,' she said simply. 'I love my father so. He's so good to me. You can't think, you can't think! I love him next to you. He isn't a nobleman or a duke, but he's the greatest man in our State, and I am very proud of him, and I don't like to have a secret that he doesn't know.'

Francesco was smiling at her vaguely, and she saw that he did not hear what she was saying. Putting one hand over both of hers and his arm round her waist, he drew her near him.

'Dearest,' he said in English, with his agreeable accent, 'something has really happened to Matteo. It is evident that I shall have to take you home.'

As he paused she finished:

'Or else let me go alone. I'm not afraid.'

'Oh, never!' he said fervently; 'you alone in the streets of Rome at midnight?'

She started at this and cried:

'Midnight? Is it as late as that? Oh, I should have gone home before, Francesco. Let me go.'

But he did not set her free.

'Come,' he said, 'we will go through here and see where Matteo has hidden himself. He's fast asleep, the old rascal, in this room, perhaps.'

Francesco relighted the candle which a few moments before had blown out. Drawing the portières and opening the door, he found he had no need of lights, for in the adjoining room all the candles were lighted—had been for long, for the white wax was already half burned down. Instead of being icy-cold the room was agreeable, for a big fire roared across the andirons of the hearth. He had led her into the old, beautiful bedchamber.

'Is this your room? What a splendid place!'

'No,' he laughed, 'not mine. Mine's a hermit's cell. This is your room, Cissy.'

'Mine!'

'Matteo has evidently gone off for the night. There's no one but a cook—a poor one, and a scullion. Otherwise there are no people here. I can't call these creatures, Cissy, and let them know or dream you are here. Matteo doesn't know who you are or guess, and it's as well.'

'He didn't know we were engaged?' she asked naïvely.

'Dearest, no; nobody does but you and my people. You wouldn't have me tell a servant, would you?'

'No, but he must have thought it very strange my coming here so.'

'He thought nothing, nothing,' said her lover.
'He's old and half-blind—an idiot!'

She placed her hand across her eyes and murmured:

'I must go home! I must go right home!'

Francesco once more held his arm round her waist. While her eyes were closed he kissed the lids. But as he kissed her, as he still held her, he heard as if from the other side of the bed the sound of falling water—a slow drip, drip, drip! It brought him to his senses with cruel suddenness. His arms fell from the girl. He raised his head.

Drip, drip, drip! from the other side of the bed, and on the hard wood floor.

'What is it?' breathed the girl. 'What is the matter?'

Set free from him she drew away.

'What is it, Francesco? What is the matter? Let me go. Let me go home!'

He tried to master himself.

'Nothing, sweetest.' As if to drown the sound and to hush his morbid senses, he again drew her into his arms, and closing her eyes told her how he loved her above life and death. He lifted her in his arms and began to go up the few steps to the couch.

There, confronting him, lying transversely on the bed from side to side, was a long Neapolitan oar—a rude oar with a blue handle worn at the end, and the water dripped from its blade. Di Torrenti could hear it fall. He held her a moment to him, his eyes fixed on the long, dreadful thing, then out of the red bedchamber into the other room he went without stopping until he had placed her once again on the divan where she had sat when she first came in. There Di Torrenti knelt down before her and rested his head against her knees. He wanted to tell her everything, to tell her everything in his life.

The girl, who had not once spoken, silently passed

her hand back and forth across his hair. When he raised his head he saw that there were tears on her face. Calling her his saint, his angel, his madonna—at all of which she shook her head—he kissed her hands over and over again, holding them against his breast.

'Don't,' she said gravely, 'call me any such names as those. I am very wicked—very wicked! But,' leaning forward she said with a grace as lovely as it is familiar to all womankind, 'I loved you so!'

He told her that she must go. And again, although he hoped for no response, he pulled the bell cord violently, and this time Matteo shuffled in, half asleep.

His master talked to him then in Italian, and the servant, who finally took her home in a closed landau with wobbly springs over the cobbled streets in the dark grey early morning, treated the little American with the deference due to royalty.

But, pale and small and silent, crouching in her corner, Cissy Porson, driving home through the streets of Rome, thought little of his deference; she had been near to life, so near that its radiance and its awe were all about her soul.

XIV

The Porsons' sitting-room in the Hôtel de Russie looked out upon the Pincio Gardens, and up—if one chose to cast one's eyes upward—to the Pincian Hills. Whatever winter cold came to this northern Italian city settled in a damp moisture round the cypresses, and appeared to rest in the garden seats,

to crawl up into the moss, the ivy and the lichens on the Pincio wall. But at the top of the wall a certain brightness never long absent from the Italian atmosphere met the cold and in some measure vanquished it. Mr. Porson, after a little outing alone with his wife to a celebrated suburban resort, took a good deal of comfort in his return. Seated before the window giving on the terrace and gardens, surrounded by blue satin furniture and a good deal of gilt carving, he read his papers and smoked, waiting for his daughter to come in and greet him, for he hadn't seen her since the previous day. Mr. Porson had one of his wife's caprices to break to Cissy, and he selfishly longed for the girl's agreeable, understanding sympathy, and her help to carry out her mother's wishes.

Mrs. Porson wanted to go back to Naples. She had seen the Vatican Museum—'the sort of trip one doesn't make more than once in a lifetime,' she told her husband—she had compared the Antonius with her photograph of him in the Wisconsin library; she had seen the ex-Queen in her automobile, and sniffed at the republican effect of it all; she had refused blankly to go to be blessed by the Pope, because she wouldn't dress in black without a death in the family. She thanked her stars she had superstition enough for that, and she missed her Neapolitan doctor—the man who had discovered her and labelled her took a great place in her mind at present.

When the millionaire suggested that the doctor be fetched to Rome, Mrs. Porson decided that it was the air of Naples that she missed, and that commodity, with all his money, Mr. Porson could not

afford to import. Mr. Porson wanted to tell Cissy that they must pack up and return to the seaport. He didn't think she'd care to stay on alone with Bird; but instead of his daughter, Birden came into the room.

The boy lounged over to the window, his hands in his pockets; he stared out at the fitful sunlight, that no sooner had it cast an exquisite lance across the path and the garden, or laid its blade, than it immediately sheathed itself, and the day looked cold as steel.

- 'Mother seems to think she'd like to go back to Naples, sonny,' said his father. The boy made no reply. 'Feel better this morning?'
 - 'Yes,' said Birden shortly, 'feel all right enough.'
- 'What time did you get back to Rome last night?'
 - 'Oh, about twelve, I guess!'
- 'Where's your sister this morning? I haven't heard a word from her.',
- 'Asleep,' said the young man, who never wasted a word.
- 'Asleep?' echoed his father, 'at eleven o'clock! That's queer! She isn't sick, too, is she?'
- 'I don't know.' And as Mr. Porson dropped most questions with his son, he let this fall. After a second the boy, on whom the father's silence had no effect, said:
 - 'When are we going to Naples?'
- 'Well,' Mr. Porson cheered at his interest, 'seems too bad, doesn't it? Mother never seems to have a chance to get any pleasure out of a place. There's a good deal to see here. I thought I'd get a carriage and a courier, and——'

Birden damned them under his breath.

'—and see round a little. But your mother——'

'Mother's right,' said the boy sharply, 'and Naples is a bully place, and I'd just as soon go back there and get out of this beastly hole as not.'

His son's likes and dislikes were antipathetic to Mr. Porson.

'That's a stupid way to speak about the capital of a country, my boy,' he said quietly, and his reproof was so rare that Birden looked toward him in surprise. 'This place wasn't built in a day, and I guess it would take you more than a week to see it. And if you like Naples so well you can go back there with your mother, and I'll stay on here with your sister.'

Bird threw himself down in a chair.

'I guess Cissy may as well go along with us,' he said with a certain meaning.

' 'Why?' asked his father sharply.

'Why, there's fever here,' said the boy after a pause.

'Oh, I think that's an old story,' said Mr. Porson. 'They told me at the bank and at Cook's that Rome is one of the healthiest cities on the globe.'

'Two servants died here yesterday in this very block,' said Bird, 'and they tell me that there were cases in the hotel last week.'

Mr. Porson started up.

'Why didn't you tell me so before?' he asked sternly.

'I am telling you,' said the young man. 'I only just found it out myself.'

'Whew!' said the Lumber King. 'Let's get out of the place as soon as we can then. Your mother was right, after all; she said she felt as though there

were a calamity over Rome, but I thought it was her Protestant prejudices. I'll go and talk to her about getting ready.' And he left his son.

The boy sat back in his chair, and even after his father's departure he did not smile at his own deceit. His sullen, morose face wore a look of singular meditation, and if such a selfish face could look sad, Birden's did so. He glanced up as the door opened again, and this time greeted his sister with a furtive look that left her as soon as she was aware of his presence.

Cissy, in a street dress with a great bunch of violets at her bodice and a lovely hat and veil, was evidently just going out. She was drawing on her gloves. The girl's face under her veil had the transparence of a fine tea-rose. There were rings about her beautiful, innocent eyes, and her lips were redder than usual, and accentuated the pallor of her cheeks. In point of fact, Cissy Porson was more beautiful than her family had ever seen her, and extremely changed. She came in hurriedly, as if expecting to find her father.

'Why, where's he gone?' she asked her brother.

'Into mother's room,' said Bird shortly, and he got up from his seat quickly for him. 'She's sick again—got another attack.'

'Oh!' Cissy received the news collectedly. She had assisted at so many of these attacks for so many years that she couldn't take them all au grand tragique. 'Oh, poor mother!'

'She's sick of it here,' Bird went on; 'says it's unhealthy and stupid, and I think she's dead right, and we're going back to Naples on the one o'clock train.'

Cissy was between the window and the door. The boy saw her face flush red as blood, and then pale.

'Why, we've only just come!' she faltered, 'four

days ago, and I haven't begun to see Rome.'

'Well, it'll keep,' said the boy curtly; 'it's kept long enough to be rotten. I guess it'll go on for a few years more.'

She turned from him angrily.

'Mother can go, and you too, if you hate it so, but I shall stay on and see the city. I guess father will stay with me. I know he will.'

'Father's keen as the rest of us to get out of Rome,' returned her brother. 'He's afraid of the fever.'

'Fever!' exclaimed Cissy; 'there's no fever here; who told him such a thing?'

'I did!'

Miss Porson faced her brother and met his heavy eyes. They went through her, they weighed upon her as weights had never before. She saw his face with an expression it had never worn before. It was defiant—it was always cross and defiant—but now it was menacing, and, withal, not exactly unkind—it was authoritative. Birden looked on a sudden twenty-five years old.

'Why, I told him so,' he said, 'and don't you give me the lie to him either, for if you do I'll tell him the truth.'

Cissy put the little muff she carried on the table and leaned upon it. She unfastened the buttons of her jacket at her throat, and set her long, fair neck free.

'The truth!' she repeated; 'what truth do you mean?'

Her brother dropped his voice. 'I came home from Tivoli last night before the rest. I was sick—I ate something that made me sick, I guess. Anyhow, I got to the hotel at midnight, and I thought I'd get you to find me some stuff or other, so I went to your room.'

The girl never flinched.

'Well, what then?'

Her nerve surprised him; but that didn't matter, after all. He continued:

'Well, you weren't there. You know it. I thought it was funny; I left my door open and waited for two hours.'

As Cissy didn't interrupt him, he went on:

'At two o'clock, when you didn't come, I got scared, so I dressed and went down and waited at the front door of the hotel outside on the street: I didn't want to ask anybody where you were until I found out it was the thing to do. Well, I saw you come in at four o'clock this morning.'

Cissy lifted her muff. She remembered all her life how the fur smelled and how the violets at her dress sent their hot perfume up with the smell of the sable. She had never as far as she knew lied in her life—certainly not to save herself; but this great, cruel boy should not know anything of Francesco.

'I got frightened all alone,' she said, 'and I started out to go to Tivoli to find you all.'

Birden appeared almost to want to find some truth in what she said; then he laughed. 'Rot, rot! You can't try that on me. I'd like to believe you—Gosh, if it were only for my sake'—(the egotism of him!)—'for the others' sake. But I happen to know.' He lowered his voice. 'I happen to know.'

'Oh, you're dreadful!' she whispered, 'a dreadful, cruel boy, and I'll ask my father to save me from you.'

He put his hand on his sister's arm—her soft, gentle arm.

'No,' he said with self-possession greater than hers, 'no, you won't; you won't speak to father or mother. Why you'd kill him—you'd kill them both.'

She blanched until her face was like her veil, and her eyes as dark as the flowers at her dress.

'That's a lie,' she said faintly, 'a lie — don't believe it.'

He seemed to take pity on her for a second, for he said less abruptly:

'I wish I didn't have to believe it, but it was like seeing with my own eyes. I went back after the old man who brought you here. I saw where he went in. I know to whom he belongs.'

The room swam before her. Her long night, the suddenness of this attack, were too much for her. She swayed. Bird sprang forward, but she pushed him violently from her; she knew that she cried out against him, to keep away, keep away. 'Don't touch me.' And the next thing she was in her father's arms and his kind face was over her.

'My God!' he said, 'how you frightened me, Cissy; I thought it was the fever. Feel better, little girl? There, there, hold on to father, hold on tight. Don't cry, Cissy, don't cry! Father's little girl.'

'Where's Bird?'

'He's gone to get the tickets and the seats in the train. We'll get out of this dreadful place as soon as we can.'

xv

Cissy, when she had opened her eyes into her father's face and clung to him, had turned away from Birden and turned her heart away from him as She gave herself up to Mr. Porson's care, and with wonderful docility accepted all his plans, even although they were to take her from Rome. A sudden terror aroused for Francesco by her brother's face, and by the fact that he said he had followed Matteo, made her feel that her safest course was to leave the capital. In the hurried departure she found means to send Francesco a line, to tell him in a word not the truth, but to tell him that they were taking her away. Very young, of a most timid and dependent character, it did not occur to Cissy to tell her father her love story. Indeed, Di Torrenti had too firmly impressed upon her his wish for secrecy, and she loved him too well to disobey him. In her letter she now besought him to come to Naples at once; to make all clear. to tell her beloved father the truth. All the way to Naples, sitting opposite Bird, whose presence she hourly felt to be more and more detestable, she pondered musingly what he might have thought of her, what he could think or believe, and in spite of her innocence she felt guilty before him, degraded. She could not bear the stain. What was Birden to judge her? He had said that it would kill her father to know. Would it kill him? Well, he had very high ideals, and he loved her so, and it was a poor return of his kindness after all these years to keep the secret of her life from him. But she had not done any wrong!... Why, then, should she dread to make the truth clear to this kind, indulgent man? As she looked out of the window the perfume of the violets came delicately to her. Di Torrenti had found means to send them up with a letter very early in the morning, and she had waked to find the flowers and the words at her bedside. Beautiful and tender as his message to her was, it had a melancholy ring in it that reached her even before her brother's anger had struck her down. And now she returned to the major phrase on the written page as she looked out at the country past which the train to Naples raced.

'You will never know how pure you seemed to me, adorata, or how beyond and above my feeble love you are. Feeble, because great as it is, and all of me as it is, it is so unworthy of you. Can I ever make myself worthy? I'll try. You will let me try. Let me? Why, you will help me. Cissy, Madonna mia, I must go on a mission, a sacred one, and until I return I can't yet speak to your people. Beside me is a letter from my father, the one I had hoped for, and all will be well. But I must perform this sacred journey first, and then I will come to you. I don't ask forgiveness for last night. I am a man, nothing more. But you were saved from me—if lovers call such intervention salvation.'

Cissy could not read the letter over and over, but she knew it by heart, and it burned like fire at her bosom, where she had thrust it under the flowers. She leaned her head against her father's shoulder, and rested upon his loving strength. He would forgive her everything when he knew, as he had always done. In order to keep back the emotion that surged up in her she closed her eyes. It was at this moment that Bird looked at her stealthily, a domineering expression in his sullen face that was nevertheless not without a mixture of ownership and pride. Cissy was pretty enough, all right—doll baby, but pretty. And he'd——

His angry menace made his cheeks hot; he felt himself outraged and his family outraged, and it devolved upon him to manage the affair. He had a dogged family loyalty that made him intend to protect the girl, and at once to keep her secret from his father and his mother.

'They're all fools about her,' he mused. 'She could wind the family round her finger. Father'd believe anything. What was Francesco doing in that old palace, anyway? What part or rôle did he play there? Guide, courier, or butler perhaps—that was it. Ugh!' He felt a fierce disapproval of her, an intense anger at her daring, and at what he thought was a shameful thing for a girl to do—a shameful thing. She seemed pitiful and weak and faulty, as he looked over at her, and yet his thoughts were more full of Francesco than of his sister. Just what his plans were to be had not formed in his slow mind, but he was gradually becoming obsessed by the idea of some kind of vengeance on the 'low hound,' as he called the courier.

There was something so appealing and so lovely in the pale face against Mr. Porson's shoulder that the beauty of Cissy's womanhood did not speak even to the little barbarian in vain, and as he furtively looked at her, from under Cissy's closed eyelids two large tears rolled down her cheeks.

He muttered to himself a boyish oath and a boyish vow.

Mr. Porson, across the car, after motioning to his son in vain, commanded in a sharp whisper:

'Sit still, sir; keep your feet still and don't you wake your sister!'

And Birden, under cover of a sullen grunt, half smiled to himself.

XVI

Francesco on the shores of the island of Capri saw the sea like a grey wall with blue iridescence lie over the face of the coral beds and spread out toward the shore. Down the steps of an old villa, down its brown mossy steps where one little cypress grew out of the wall and the curious moss flowered in summer and in spring, a girl came carrying a basket; she was a young, good-looking creature, the type of the Capri women, broad-browed, broadchested, with shining teeth and eyes.

'Buon giorno,' Di Torrenti said pleasantly. The peasant returned his greeting with the smile a young, good-looking woman bestows on a young, handsome man.

'Can you tell me the shortest way to the village of Ambidiana?'

'Ma st, ma st,' she answered; she was from there herself and she was more or less on her way there; it would be nothing to turn aside.

But no, the *eccellensa* was not at present going to Ambidiana; he only wanted to know the quickest route, which, so it seemed, was to turn and wind, to turn and wind along the shore for upward of half a mile.

'One can get a boat there, no doubt, to do some fishing?'

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Oh, but there was only that at Ambidiana, fishing—nothing more easy; indeed, the girl with the basket could direct him to an honest man.

Francesco wrote his name down and looked at the speaker. She had the supple, soft beauty, the oxeneyed beauty that he had once found seductive. In her coarse dress, her brown skin, her brown locks, her big, fine arms, her broad, deep bosom, she was like, dreadfully like . . . And he had himself carried such a basket miles along the beach in the soft wind over the stones.

He understood quite well that he was about a mile's distance from the little village. He ventured now to mention to the peasant that there had been another name suggested to him, the name of Pesca. Did she chance to know that?

Oh, but they were neighbours. Did she know! Well, well. And she threw up her pretty head and burst forth into a voluble flow of words. She leaned her basket on the stone of the wall, and, led on by him, told him-and delighted in the tellingall the little stories of Ambidiana, of the Pescas, of her own family, and, as if he did not know every word of it, she began to tell him in her pretty Italian something of Marina, 'Marina,' she said, 'was the happiest girl on the coast, though why she should have been. Heaven knows, for she was poor. and she was not married. The man she was engaged to had gone to America, her brothers were a sullen lot, and the nobleman who came and painted her and stayed for a while on the island sailed away never to return.'

'Well,' said the listener, 'bene, bene, and she mourned for him, did she---?'

The girl shrugged her shoulders.

'Marina was not a crying girl,' she said; 'if she mourned, no one knew it. She used to look, for the most part, like some one who had seen a vision, like some one to whom the Blessed Virgin had appeared.'

Francesco hurried his inquiry.

'Well,' he said again, 'bene, bene, and what became of her? Where is Marina?'

With a superb gesture the girl threw her brown arms and hands out towards the sea.

'Ecco, ecco!' she said. 'Marina took her brother's boat one night and rowed out; and they found the boat after, again, bottom side upward. It floated down the bay, but Marina or trace of her was never found. Her mother says that the Blessed Virgin took her from the sea, but that's not likely. The fishermen think her body has been caught and imprisoned among the weeds by the other oar—

The Italian to whom she spoke turned his back suddenly upon her. He fixed his eyes upon the sparkling waters. His suffering gaze seemed to take in the entire limpid face of the unrevealing sea. Beyond the unbroken expanses, past the other islands, past the brown velvety shores, Francesco looked as if he fancied that he might discover somewhere trace of the girl of whom her fellow-townswoman spoke. But it was, in truth, to hide his emotion that he turned his face from the girl.

'Why,' he tortured himself, 'did Marina do it? Was it possible that she had taken her own life in a misery of which no one knew the existence or the cause?' He turned for a second to the girl and asked: 'And what do they think, what do they say?'

'Ma che!' nodded the peasant. 'Marina was a good Catholic; they were all kind at home except Piero. Piero wanted her to marry the man in America, and he has always been angry with her for that. But she had little to do with him at best. They say,' she continued, 'that she was standing up in her boat, as she often did, singing, and that she lost her balance in some way and went down. Of course, it was an accident; Marina was a good Catholic, Signorino.'

Di Torrenti had already turned away from her and was again looking out at sea. The pretty fisher-girl picked up her basket and waited, laughing a little to catch his attention, but the Signore did not turn. Timid of a sudden, and thinking that, perhaps, she had offended him by some stupidity on her part, she whispered under her breath, 'Scusi, Signore, scusi,' but the strange visitor made no sign that he heard.

She finally stole away silently, stopping after a few steps to look back, thinking that he might have stirred, but he had not moved, and she saw him immovably standing there, his face seaward, and at last she turned the cliff towards Ambidiana, and its green cliff, outjutting, hid him from her view.

XVII

He scarcely knew how he got away from Capri. He must have hailed the friendly boat which, in the shape of a little puffing launch, came briskly up and laid hold of something that went out into the waters in lieu of a pier. When he had sprung on board it

seemed to him that he had wandered for days and days in the region of Ambidiana, haunted and troubled.

But the Professor Glestheim, who indeed had steamed up in his bright, gay little launch, seized Di Torrenti and made him persona grata on board. The people with the scientist, a few guests, some foreign ladies and gentlemen, appeared to Di Torrenti to be the most natural and human and delightful people he had ever seen; he could have hugged them all. They were flesh and blood.

No one had ever seen Di Torrenti more charming or more gay; most lovable and sunny always, he gave himself out on this afternoon with peculiar responsiveness, and he won everybody by his charm. But it was not alone the worldly company of his friends which turned his mind from his morbid quest. He seemed to have entirely cast away all care. Even on the little boat, as he stood with the Professor in the prow, he was sensible that a change had passed over him. He began at length to feel something like peace. As if a cord, whose tension was more than his mind and spirit could have borne, had perceptibly snapped, he realised that the tie between himself and the poor dead was sundered.

The beautiful bay over which the little launch skidded was no longer a tomb. He could see its sparkle and lustre, found it beautiful and reflected its brightness. He could breathe without anguish. He could dare to look at Naples as a man released from captivity.

He understood now the meaning of Marina's return. She had been permitted to save his life; not only his life, but something dearer and more

precious—the honour of the woman he loved. She had, indeed, 'helped him in everything'; she had indeed, proved her loyalty. In his heart there arose a strong, sincere desire to help her in turn. 'If,' he thought, 'she suffered in ever so little for me, I hope that I may suffer for her in turn,' and as he made the honest wish it was as though its expression set him free, for there was, at the moment, a sundering and severing of the tie between himself and the dead. Marina had liberated him. Perhaps, indeed, the Virgin had taken her up from the deeps! At all events, she did not claim him any more. He would build a chapel to her later, he would give her family a fortune. The idea that he would tell Cissy the story had scarcely entered his mind. There were many, many things that he would tell her, but the story of Marina must lie with the poor thing at the bottom of the bay, he decided: it was no one's affair but his own. The thing that had troubled him above all else, when he had permitted it to do so, was the fact that the fisherman knew his name: something must be done about that, there was no question. The man must be largely paid, if he would take money -it remained to be seen. Giorgio would help him; he would see him as soon as he could, and they would arrange some plan together.

'Cerco il sole,' he murmured, and, as if in answer to his words, a golden burst of sunset fell over the bay. The vast, ponderous mountains rose from it like peaks of gold, and Naples, like a city of the Golden Age, brought its tapestries down to the bright water.

Cissy was there! He thought of the pure, gentle beauty of the little face, and turning to his friend the Professor as the launch puffed up to the pier, said ardently:

'I am the happiest man in Italy, professore mio.'

The old man smiled benignly, and said keenly:

'She must be very beautiful, then.'

'You know?' asked the other in surprise.

The Professor laughed.

'And I'm not even a seer! only a practical German. But you have not yet told me what you were doing on the shores of Capri. Were you finding her a pearl?'

'No,' said the young man, shaking his head, 'I had lost a iewel there.'

The Professor nodded.

'Well, don't go back for it again.'

XVIII

The extreme excitement of the night at the palazzo left its imprint on Cissy Porson. She was like an instrument too tightly strung, across which a violent wind had passed. Some of the cords had snapped, some hung loose, and those that remained gave forth music as melancholy as it was sweet. She had grown so pale that her father, with a terrified remembrance of her fainting fit, ordered her to see her mother's doctor. But the old Italian physician had no desire to discover a new disease in the young girl. He was clever enough to see traces of a very old malady. After questioning her he said:

'Young girls of her age in Europe are either married or engaged, and Miss Porson will be married soon?'

'Married!' the mother and father exclaimed; 'why, we've never thought of it!'

The doctor smiled.

'Possibly the young lady has. I think,' he added, 'that the young lady's heart is engaged. I think she is amorosa, as we have it.'

If Cissy could have seen her father that self-same evening after the doctor had left Mrs. Porson's room she might have told him the truth, but her future was not to be thus determined. She avoided Birden, and during the few days of their stay at Naples he did not seem at all anxious to seek his sister's society.

He lounged about the Via Emanuele, contenting himself with the society of his fisherman, who had turned up upon the scene.

That evening, as the girl stood in her own room before her glass, meditatively considering her image, wondering whether it were true that she were really changed, and if Francesco would find her so, Birden came in. She started as though he were an enemy.

'Look here, Cissy,' he said, 'Francesco is back in Naples.'

She made no immediate answer, but to steady herself took hold of the back of her chair between herself and her brother.

'I guess it isn't any news to you, but I saw him on the Via Emanuele with another man an hour ago. Now you listen to me, Cissy Porson; it's your business, of course, in a measure, as far as it concerns you alone, but, as it happens, you're my sister, and I'm not going to see you——'

'Hush,' she said, 'not another word!'

The boy stood over her, and—for she did not draw

away from him—took hold of one of her delicate wrists.

'You've got to hear me,' he said excitedly; 'it won't take two minutes. I don't ask you any questions. I don't care what Francesco is, whether he's a courier or a prince, but I know that he's a hound, and he doesn't understand Americans!'

'Father!' cried the girl, 'father!'

'I'll tell him so to his face; I'll teach him—I'll thrash him!' said the boy deeply, 'if——'

Again she cried her father's name.

'Why do you call father?' said her brother quietly, standing back from her and letting her hand fall. 'Do you want him to know that you were out all night with a man?'

She stared at her brother transfixed.

'Perhaps you're married to him,' Birden went on.
'I hope you are. Are you? Well, don't answer—I don't want to bully you, Cissy, though it seems like it, and I don't want to threaten you. I'm after him; I'll give him three days to get out of here, and, if you meet him or see him or talk to him, why, let him look out for me, that's all.'

Because he threatened her lover she listened, her lips white and drawn, her eyes terrible in fear and dislike.

'I hate you!' said the gentle Cissy, 'I hate you!'

'Oh, that's all right,' Birden shrugged. 'I can stand it if I get you out all right.'

'You're terrible!' she panted, 'terrible! And if my father knew—when he knows——'

'Tell him,' said the boy tranquilly and without malice. 'Tell him everything.'

'I will,' said Cissy; 'I will tell him to-night.'

'I'm sorry for you if you do,' said her brother. 'He's silly about you, all right, but I know the governor. He looks at things just one way.'

Mr. Porson's hand was on the door, and Birden himself opened it. 'Come in,' he invited; 'Cissy has got something to tell you.' And as he spoke the boy went out whistling into the next room.

In Mr. Porson's hand were some letters.

'Here, little girl, there are some letters for you. I got them at Cook's as I came up.'

She took the little package out of his hand, and the first letter caught her eye.

'What have you got to say to me, daughter?'

She ran her hand through her father's arm; she tore her letter open, half read it, and then looked up at him.

'Nothing,' she faltered, 'nothing, father, just now.'
He gazed tenderly at her, and the doctor's words, which had not ceased to haunt him, recurred in all their force. But Mr. Porson had the reticence of his race and the delicacy that made him hesitate to demand a confidence of his daughter.

'Nothing,' he repeated, 'just now? Do you know what that doctor said to me? He thinks you are in love.'

Cissy laughed, still tremulous and still clinging to his arm. Mr. Porson had gone over in his mind the different young men who had been devoted to his daughter, without success. The letter, in a foreign hand, which he brought up to her from Cook's, had already attracted his attention. He had thought several times about it and had thought of several things; but a prudery, a timidity even before this gentle creature who needed in reality his aid, kept

the Lumber King silent. He put his hand under Cissy's chin and turned her face up and looked down into it. It was like a flower and as pure as the morning.

'Don't get into trouble,' he said, 'or worry about anything. If money can do any good, why you know where to get it. And as for the rest,' he nodded, and he did not need to finish it. A few seconds before and she would have told him everything, but the letter sealed her lips.

Birden's voice broke in from the next room, and Mr. Porson turned back to go to join his wife. And as Cissy followed into the parlour her brother saw that she had not said anything to disturb her father's peace.

XIX

That night, as he expressed it, Birden 'went out with the boys.' It was a very harmless and innocent bacchanal, and consisted of a dinner at the Grand Hotel with some schoolboys from a Western college, and a drive across town which brought Birden and his friends home at about one o'clock. But the feast had been of a sufficient brilliance to keep the young man in bed late the following morning. As he strolled into the sitting-room for his breakfast he found his mother there alone. After he had finished his coffee and rolls, for he never spoke when he was hungry, he asked:

'Where's the rest of the folks?'

'Your father,' said Mrs. Porson, 'has gone to see about a passage home.'

'Passage home!'

'I don't suppose you'll care one way or another,' said his mother, 'but I'm afraid Cissy will be real disappointed.'

'What's up?'

The lady sighed.

'Why, it's this feeling I have round my heart. It don't seem to get any better, Bird. The doctor said that he didn't see that it got any better, so I told your father I might as well be this way home as anywhere else. The sea seems calm,' she pursued, looking out of the window; 'I thought it might stay so all the way over if we go right away. So your father's gone to Cook's.'

'When's the next boat?' asked the boy.

'There's a big Cunarder out to-morrow,' said Mrs. Porson comfortably, 'and it seems as though he ought to get something on that boat, it's so big. I've told Louise.'

'Have you told Cissy?'

'No,' said her mother slowly. 'I'm afraid she'll be real disappointed. She likes Europe. But I'll get your father to tell her when he comes home.'

'Where is Cissy?' asked her brother abruptly.

'She's been gone these three hours.'

Bird sprang up from the table. Taking his hat, which lay there where he had thrown it the night before, he asked:

'Well, where's she gone to?'

'She's gone to Capri for the day.'

'To Capri!' he echoed, and quickly added: 'Well, who's she gone with?'

'I don't know,' said Mrs. Porson mournfully, 'she didn't say. I don't know as she's gone with anybody. There are big boats, you know, that run over

to those islands; lots of people go on them. It's a pretty excursion.'

But her son was at the door.

'Say,' he interrupted, 'if Pop gets those tickets, you tell Louise not to touch those sea specimens and shells if she packs my things. I'm going out, and I won't be home till dinner.'

And Mrs. Porson's second child cruelly deserted her, leaving her alone in the brilliant sunshine to consider the palpitations of her heart.

$\mathbf{X}\mathbf{X}$

Di Torrenti folded his father's letter thinking of every word it said, and thrust it into his pocket. He had smoked several cigarettes and finished his coffee, had written a letter to the Villa Maggiore in answer to his father, and now waited impatiently until the hour came round when he should meet Cissy Porson. The old Duca had written just the letter his son had reason to expect, and there was nothing to keep him now from asking Mr. Porson for his daughter. But first he wanted one day with Cissy, with her alone, before the rest of the world should come in, before life and other people should jar the intimacy of their bliss. He wanted to prolong their wonderful solitude, to repeat, as far as was possible, the charm of their wanderings together when he had first shown beauty to her sweet, ignorant eyes, and found herself to be the most dear beauty of it all. But the Duca had another intention, another idea more serious than this. Although, indeed, Marina had ceased to appear before him in any tangible shape, and he was exorcised from the

more painful spell, there was nevertheless some underlying accusation of himself that would not yet leave him. And so intense and deep was the feeling that he would do Cissy a wrong not to tell her that, although he had confessed to a priest and been absolved, Francesco began to believe that only Cissy, her hand and love, could really heal his remorse. Before speaking to Mr. Porson he now wanted to tell Cissy the story from beginning to end, and from the second that he took the decision he could not wait until he should accomplish it; and with an obstinacy for which his race is celebrated, and a thoroughness and a completeness which proved how sincere was his wish to blot out the whole affair, he decided to take Cissy to Capri, and on the very place itself tell her Marina's story.

The girl joined her lover at the foot of the town, where a little carriage fetched her to the landing-place. At the first sight of Francesco, whom she had not seen since the night in the Palazzo di Torrenti, she trembled so that she could scarcely stand or make her way to the little launch where the Duca waited to help her embark. Di Torrenti wore a long, dark overcoat with loose sleeves; tall and distinguished, he towered above the boatmen who waited smiling as the pretty Signorina came up to the launch and the Duca helped her in.

They had shot far out into the blue clearness of the water before the girl realised where she was or that she must really speak to her lover. But Francesco seemed to need no words.

'Over there is old Pompeii,' he said; 'we had such a happy time there! Behind it is Naples, where we have known and loved each other.'

'And before us,' interrupted the girl, 'is all our life.' She put one of her little hands up with great sweetness and laid it on his shoulder, and lifted her face, full of emotion and tenderness, to Di Torrenti. He arranged a place for her in the cushions at the side of the boat and seated himself beside her. They were very near the water; the green blue waves curled and lapped and sung about the boat's sides and the bow. On either hand rose the pink and brown shores, and far away in the mist Capri seemed to swim like a great pyramid of asphodels. It was early morning and the air fresh and cool. There were only a few barques afloat with their brown sails.

Francesco told her that he had news from his people, and that his father's consent was absolute, and he no longer waited to speak to Mr. Porson.

'When I take you home to-night I'm going to ask him for my bride.'

With a feminine instinct that forbids a woman to trouble or annoy the man she loves, and with whom her intercourse is limited, the young girl told him nothing more of the misery her brother had caused her. When the Italian exclaimed at her pallor and thinness, she told him she had missed him so cruelly, and Di Torrenti found her all the more lovely for the fact that her beauty had faded for the need of him.

Side by side, his arm about her waist, his hand in hers, they sat tranquilly, enveloped by the beauty round them which seemed part of the perfection of their love.

By the time they had reached the island Francesco had not hinted a word of the mission on which they

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had come. He had talked to her of nothing but love, and every time he thought to begin the tragic story of his past two years, her serious eyes, the trust on her face, forced him, perhaps, for the very first, to think of her and to spare her.

The little launch was ordered to put up at the moorings just below the villa of Tiberius, some miles from the village of Ambidiana. And Francesco, leaving his boat there, guided the girl over the rocks up the hill.

They spent the whole day together on the hills. Francesco found the cabin of a goatherd, and he made the man give them a cup of *brodo*, some cheese and bread, and a little good old wine which the old fellow brought out with great pride. The girl made merry over the breakfast. It was such happiness to be there together in the far-away hut in a deserted place, and break bread alone with the man she loved.

Cissy's charming bare hands, from which she had taken all her rings, were folded meekly in her lap. She told her lover that she had not dared wear his ruby for fear that her family would remark it.

'That is,' she said, 'I don't wear it on my hand, but here'—and she touched her heart. She had been wonderfully gay, her face all light and smiles, laughing with him, telling him pretty childlike stories and making him repeat the English words she liked to hear him attempt. He had found her more lovely than ever, and as the day went on did not know how to break the spell. They both lost track of time finally, and, as the winter day does in the southern country, it began to decline suddenly, and the disappearance of the sun behind the first clouds made Francesco start.

'It has grown late,' he said, 'and it's against the stream going back. We must leave Capri.'

'Oh, no,' Cissy cried, 'don't let's go, don't! Let's stay here for ever. Francesco!'

He smiled and shook his head.

'Not in Capri, carissima; after to-day I want never to see it again. I never want to see it again!'
She exclaimed:

'Why, haven't you been happy here to-day? What a cruel thing!'

'Dearest, forgive me!' he pleaded. 'I have been happy. I love you so!' he cried passionately, 'that you could make me happy above a grave.'

They had begun slowly to take their way along the rocks down toward the shore. As they did so, and stood out alone on the beach, their two figures, plainly visible in the light, were seen by a man and a boy in another launch that as fast as the steam could fetch it pressed towards the shore. Looking out across the bay at the darkening waters, the lovers remained so, Francesco's arm round Cissy, and they seemed like one form.

Then they reluctantly stirred and together made their way down along the beach toward their own vessel, where the engineer was curled up on the seat asleep; the other man, fishing from the end of the jetty, waited until the Signorino would have finished his excursion.

It was just here that Di Torrenti had met the Ambidiana girl a few days before, just here that he had learned the story of Marina. But how could he tell this girl the history of Marina della Pesca? He would tell her father, Mr. Porson—that would do—he would lay all his life bare to the good man,

and he would leave it to his wisdom to tell the girl whatever he thought she should know. But Cissy was speaking.

'They have their stories, haven't they, these old, old stones?' she said. 'What if they could speak!'

Di Torrenti said quickly:

'They might tell us things of sadness and tragedy—even of death, Cissy.'

'You always speak of it,' she said, 'most of the time.'

'I won't,' he assured her, 'ever again. I will never cloud your sun if I can help it.' He held her back a second. 'But, just here, just now, tell me, if these old stones should tell you of a woman who, perhaps, walked them in loneliness, waiting for the man she loved——'

But, at sight of the girl's face, Francesco paused in his story. In spite of his own gravity it remained so serene and untroubled. Cissy shook her pretty head.

'But they must have many other stories,' she said gently, 'of happy lovers, and I would rather hear of those.' She appealed to him, smiling. 'I believe if they started to speak in such a melancholy way that I'd interrupt them and tell them of happier feet that have passed over them, of happier footsteps,' she said charmingly, 'steps that were so light, so joyful, that they effaced all the others that ever fell here, Cecco—all the others.'

Di Torrenti gazed in rapture at her. She seemed illumined as she looked up at him. Her words rang with a sweetness so profound that they sounded like bells.

'What a pretty thing to say!' he breathed. 'Why, you are quite a poet.'

She shook her head.

'No, only people in love think all sorts of fancies.'
He put his arms about her.

'Do you believe that no matter how sad and deep the footsteps were, no matter how sad, mark you, they could be effaced?'

Whether the young girl understood or remotely felt that he had an underlying meaning, or believed him to be only following out her own pretty thought, at all events she said firmly:

'I am sure that in your life and in mine there are no other footsteps than our own.'

Di Torrenti went on desperately, longing now, since he had come so far, for her complete pardon, yet without daring to confess his soul.

'I am not as good as you—oh, I'm not good at all. There have been so many, many ways in my life.'

'Perhaps,' she accorded, 'but all of them have led here, haven't they?'

He exclaimed, 'Yes, yes,' and drew her close to him. Cissy pushed his heavy hair back and looked long into his eyes as if she searched him, and finding there as far and as deeply as she could see nothing but her own image, she kissed him.

As they stood thus, one figure as it were, as they had been before, round the right curve of the rock, Birden Porson came with another man. The boy restrained his friend by the arm.

'Be quiet,' he said roughly in his awkward Italian; 'you let me scare 'em! I'll scare 'em good, all right.' And he sprang forward.

But scarcely had the two lovers separated and looked about than the other man with a cry rushed

forward, and with a curse cried out Di Torrenti's name—and before the arm of Cissy could interpose or the boy interfere, the fisherman had struck once, twice, through the breast of the man to whom the woman still clung.

So the boy, white and terrified, overwhelmed, saw his sister cling, bending over her lover as he lay outstretched on the stones of the beach, calling to him, kissing his eyes, his brow, and his hair, holding his hands to her heart, calling her father's name, her mother's name, but, above all, Francesco's, with a wildness and a grief that will ring in Birden's ears until age stops them.

So Birden, as he turned and ran, saw her cling, so he saw her as he hurried to summon the people of the launch, the people of the village, to call whom he might find to come, and to do what they could for the man his brutal act had led to death. So clinging to Francesco, he saw Cissy kneeling by his side, and as he looked back the two figures seemed to be as one form.

'So that,' he had coherence enough to think, 'was the man from Rome—the man Piero hated. Well, he avenged his sister all right. I guess I've killed mine.'

Birden ran to the launch, where one man was asleep, and where his comrade sat whistling 'Santa Lucia.' In the young fellow's excitement he failed to make the Italians understand. They only smiled at him. Finally, one of them said, 'Di Torrenti, Duca di Torrenti,' and pointed. And the name broke upon the boy's aching brain. 'Oh, yes,' he said, 'yes, come—the Duca morto.' And they cursed, as is the fashion of their kind, sprang up, and followed him.

Several other fishermen were at their boats, and Birden—though what use they could be he did not know—screamed for them and pointed, and they followed the sailors of Di Torrenti's launch like hares. He had not thought of pursuing Piero, but even as he returned he saw the little launch in which they had come deserted, rocking on the bay. Oh, Piero would get away all right; he was a member of a society stronger than the laws of Italy.

Birden, branded, cursed, felt himself far worse than the man who had done the crime. He could never forget Di Torrenti's face as he fell, or the face of Piero as he had screamed and struck. And Cissy! What would she do? She would never look at him or speak to him again. Should he go back to her or should he fly and hide? A sweat rose on his forehead and a salt taste came up in his mouth. Then the natural responsibility which seemed to be strong in his crude, savage nature turned his face back towards the wretched place. He couldn't leave her alone with all these men. She couldn't speak the language; he might even blindly serve her, protect her. Well, he had protected her, God knew.

He slunk along up to where the group seemed black upon the sands. The men were gesticulating and talking all together, and one of them, the engineer of Di Torrenti's launch, bent with Cissy over the man on the ground.

Birden forced his way into the circle. If Francesco's face and Piero's impressed him, his sister's, as she raised it, looking at one man after the other, will remain in his mind all his life. It was like the face of resurrection, the face of the dead that had been made alive for an hour. Both her hands were over

Di Torrenti's heart; he saw that she must have torn some of her own clothing to stanch the wounds.

'Cissy,' he said to her, forcing his words out, 'Cissy!'

The man nearest him, the boatman who had been whistling 'Santa Lucia,' said a million things about Ischia and Napoli, and dottori, and celebratori; and the man who was bathing Di Torrenti's brows said many other lightning things. His eyes still fascinated by the pale, beautiful face of his sister, Birden eagerly translated for her.

'This man says that it won't be possible to stir him or move him; he says not to lift his hands or stir him. This man says that there are a lot of celebrated doctors in the observatory at Ischia.'

The pale, drawn lips of the girl moved.

'They must get them—all of the doctors, as fast—as fast—'

The engineer of the little launch had already sprung up and started on a run, motioning to his fellow. The boy, in agony, drew near her, as thus deserted she knelt alone by Francesco's side; but as he approached she half sprung up.

'Go!' she recoiled—'Go!' Then she bent over the ashen face of the man whose life-blood her hands kept back as they could. She murmured a few distraught words to him.

Still Birden drew near. He would have knelt down.

'Go!' repeated Cissy, 'with the men; fetch the doctors, all of them. And, if you bring them in time—if he lives—if they save him—I will try to forgive you. If he dies, let me never see your face again!'

The boy tore away like the wind.

XXI

And Birden Porson learned a great many lessons in the long, long weeks that lengthened and lengthened, turned into fragrant spring and hot summer, and grew warmer and more splendid as the months passed on the island. He knew the beach and the shores, and the walks and the paths and every foot of Capri by heart. He learned the language and he translated for the family, and played cards with his mother, and listened to her maladies patiently, and 'jollied her up,' as he said, until there grew a certain intimacy between mother and son. She was the only person save the natives who spoke to him. From the moment Mr. Porson took his daughter in his arms and learned the truth, neither one of them ever addressed a word to the boy. But his mother pitied him. He bore his part as well as he could, and something of his savageness and his roughness slipped away.

One marvellous afternoon in late June, when the sea was wide and blue and motionless, and the red sails and the brown sails cast their mellow shadows like the reflection of warm fruits, and the golden shores shone into the bay, and the old steps down to the sea looked like a festival staircase, for they were abloom with flowers, Birden, who had been fishing, drew his boat up the beach and began to ascend the steps. At the top of them he saw his sister waiting. And when he reached her side, with a gesture peculiar to Cissy, and one of great grace and sweetness, she put out one little hand.

He knew what she meant, and that she had come down to meet him, with his pardon. He was a big,

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rude fellow, made for the lumber camp, for sharp justice, of lawless codes; he was not made for the finer civilisations. He didn't know what to say. But impulsively he put his cheek to hers; it was their first embrace since they had been children. And following the character of their innocent reconciliation, the brother and sister took hands and went up the path side by side toward the white stucco house behind the cypress and the velvet cedars, where Di Torrenti, out of danger and on the way to recovery, lay asleep, his face turned towards the bay, to whose depths and to whose secrets peace had been eternally brought by the spilling of his blood.

WHEN SPRING COMES LATE

T

WHEN Dagget said that he would forgive his wife, he had meant it with the same sincerity he had meant the 'love, honour, and cherish' in the marriage service which, quietly, with no emotion and a sense of calm satisfaction, he had three years before repeated after the rector in the Westminster Episcopal Church. The promise to love, honour, and cherish is one set of responsibilities—one might almost call them pleasures; the promise to forgive is quite a different affair! It is not in the marriage service, and is another consideration entirely.

As Dagget kept his churchly vows—and in reviewing his married years he fully acquitted his performance—so he intended to keep that other vow, made before no priest, but tacitly, simply given to the woman who had done him signal wrong.

When what he knew had come to his cognisance his first thought had been of his son, his second of his wife; then, calmly, with a mingling of scorn, disdain, and wonder, of the other man. Of himself, as a wronged man, he had not thought until these last days when, alone with his wife in a foreign country, under the influence of novel environments, he found himself cast upon his alien surroundings for diversion—and on the society of his wife for happiness. The sufficiency of these to constitute

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life and agreeable gaiety, he began to question, and to wonder what was so ultimately wrong in the reasonable state of affairs. Where was the agreeable phase of mind his generous pardon should have produced?

Dagget, restless and sleepless, began to realise that he was not at peace. He slowly confessed that unhappiness was the logical cause of his moral condition, and began to ask himself why. Nowhere could he have found so congenial a climate. The air was balm; the sky as blue at nightfall as it had hung above them all day. Seen from the elevation of the hotel, the Bay of Naples, in blue, gray, and opal, melted before him into the far horizon; whilst just below, the closely-built, irregular town, with its houses of pink, yellow, and blue stucco, lay like tapestry mellowed with time; a woven city of monotones and softened colours, all its casements facing the sea.

As, towards seven o'clock, he stood in the glass pavilion of Bertolini's, waiting for his wife to come in with him to dinner, the city began to light here and there with electric lights. One by one the windows glowed like jewels fallen at the hill's foot, and sheer across the bay rose the black mass of Vesuvius, its scarred ancient sides red with the long old wound. Dagget's eyes fixed themselves on the yawning gash from which the smoke rolled back in feathery waves. The mountain was a gigantic tortured creature with wounded flanks open to the pity of the world.¹

The man set his face, thinner and more serious of

¹ It is interesting to note that Miss V. V.'s novel was written a few weeks before the last eruption.

late, towards the beauty of which he saw little, and patiently waited for his wife. He was very near-sighted, and through brilliantly-polished glasses his eyes—thoughtful, meditative eyes—studied a world encountered by reason and intellect, and ignored by the senses.

At the present time he was much bewildered in his reflections, and the unaccustomed befogging of his thoughts troubled him more than a little.

Dagget was Doctor of Mathematics at one of the largest American universities, and so accurate in his mental operations that to find himself unable to grasp the psychic situation—above all, of his own mind—was as astonishing to him as it would have been to find a simple problem unsolvable by the rule of three! It signified an abnormal state of matters. He murmured to himself: 'I am ill; the air of Naples does not seem yet to agree with me; or else'—his habitual truthfulness made him in the same breath acknowledge—'I am not happy.'

This admission presupposed that he had been happy. He had at least believed himself so to be. Absorbed in his university work, housed and sheltered in a pretty, tasteful home presided over by a beautiful young woman, he had never known a moment of keen suffering until this moment in the great window of the Naples hotel. A new excitement, the fact of being brought instantly face to face with a problem that called upon his trained and responsive powers of mind to resolve, the stimulus of responsibility, the need for immediate action, and the sudden departure from his home in the university town, had acted like narcotics to his more personal self, never very keenly living or habitually considered or pampered. The

voyage from New York to Italy on a fourteen-day boat had been made with a fellow-passenger engaged on a work of keenest scientific interest, and Dagget spent many hours with his colleague, sharing with him the services of a stenographer; for the professor himself had been correcting the last proofs of a mathematical treatise when his domestic tangle forced him for a time to leave his post in the college.

He had not, until now, once thought of himself as a man, and the personal Ego seemed to have been lying in wait at Naples, to have met him here, starting out with unearthly strides of a Frankenstein order. And certainly, if invisible to all eyes but his own, to-night the horror stood beside him, and on the visage of the Image Dagget read acute unhappiness. There was nothing mathematical about itthis state of affairs. Nor could its presence—of the Image—be solved by rule, although the professor thought it should be! The creature was human flesh and blood, and if repressed and stereotyped, it had organs and nerves and capacities with which to suffer and to enjoy. The Image appeared to hold in its hand a paper whereon Dagget's near-sighted eves read without difficulty:

'I have promised to forgive, and I can't do it—it is a lie.'

Three or four guests of the hotel, men and women, were seated at a little table near him. One of them had a field-glass and through it contemplated Vesuvius. The others were drinking cocktails, and one pretty woman was smoking a fragrant cigarette. They were well-bred, quiet, and well-behaved, and their manners in no way accorded with the customs the professor thought repulsive, fast, and disgusting.

Something in the attitude of the woman smoking recalled his wife to him, and a revulsion passed through him as he glanced at her and away. Mrs. Dagget was slenderer, her hair was not arranged as was this lady's, but her type was the same, softly pretty and weakly feminine, with a combination of assurance and timidity that had a charm for most men, and that Dagget considered dangerous.

He began to think that the setting was more in accordance with his wife's type than any in which he had yet seen her, and he reluctantly forced himself to believe it; he could easily believe her one of this rather irresponsible party. A few changes in her dress, and she would be like them. He could even fancy her smoking! Westminster had never been a suitable frame for Letty Dagget. Could it be possible that as certain forms of life degenerate and become abnormal out of their climate and element, such might be the case with . . .?

He stopped: in the farther door his wife appeared at last, and Dagget turned about as she advanced towards him. Alongside of the cosmopolitan group, Mrs. Dagget appeared very simple indeed. Her dinner-dress was a white muslin shirt-waist and a blue serge skirt.

'Here you are!'—his voice had a note of affectionate condescension. 'Shall we go in to dinner?'

She nodded, and preceded him into the diningroom to the right of the pavilion.

11

Letty Thorpe had been scarcely nineteen when Dagget married her out of a little boarding-house

where he had gone daily for several months to give her lessons in higher mathematics. The girl, penniless, had planned to start in the world and make her living as a governess. A letter from her father, a classmate of Dagget's, had confided her more or less to the professor's consideration and care. When the alternative of a marriage with her father's friend was placed before her, she had not hesitated to accept it. That is, Dagget could not recall that she had hesitated. On the contrary, she had seemed grateful and affectionate. Shortly before the wedding he inherited a comfortable fortune from an uncle, and in the house he built her and where their son was born, they passed to his thinking three tranquil, consistent years. What had they been to Letty? How could he answer? He had never asked! He had no means of knowing. She had seemed interested in her household; an active, much-sought-for addition to college circles, a graceful hostess to his friends, and a good, loving mother. That she had been brooding, wretched, discontented. and desirous, he had no means to divine, for in so far as he remembered she had always appeared cheerful and contented.

Her good looks, her extreme good looks—he had himself thought them so—were indeed a certain source of anxiety to him, as well as of pride. 'Pretty Mrs. Dagget'—even 'beautiful Mrs. Dagget'—he knew they so called her, and he knew too that she had awakened more than one flame in the hearts of the different class members, from fresh-men to seniors. It had never occurred to the professor to be jealous, and he would have done his wife injustice in so being at any time. When the thunder-bolt

fell it was out of a sky as clear as a mild June day, and the stunned man had left himself only sufficient pause to make his decision, a decision made with his best, profoundest reason, a faculty ready at call through force of long habit. He had not himself yet swung to or regained the regular rhythm after the commotion.

'Letty,' he observed as they sat at table, 'you did not think well to change your dress?'

She excused it, saying she had gone out to another hotel, thinking there might be letters for them there, and had come in too late. As she made her explanation she looked at her husband, half questioning his expression, and then she blushed a terrible crimson.

'You don't believe me?'

He started.

'My dear!'

'No,' she said suffocatingly; 'you don't believe me!'

She looked down at her plate, and the red in her cheeks faded out in stripes, scarlet lines showing sharp against the white of her face. Dagget watched the tempest of colour subside, dumbfounded at her intense way of speaking. Above all, his honesty would not allow him too thoroughly to gainsay her. He knew that even as she had spoken a doubt instantly insinuated itself in his mind, and that, if only partially, he distinctly questioned her excuses. It was an uncomfortable dinner; he was thankful when it came to an end and he might make his way to his own room.

His bedroom adjoined his wife's, and in order to continue the scientific work so rudely broken in

upon, he had installed his table in an alcove like a little study, and now seated himself to work and meditate.

More or less absorbed, he managed to do some little reading until he found himself drawing designs of cubes and angles on his blotting paper. Then the professor stopped, and, without pushing his chair back, sat, his face buried in his hands, and rapidly, as though he had not at all left the subject, he resumed his reflections of an hour before. thing Letty did, had done, since her husband knew, surprised him. She had daily revealed herself as a new person. Had he, then, never really known her? -never really understood her? . . . Could it be said that he had never understood his wife; that, unlike the exact and logical problems with which he was familiar, Letty was a mystery? He admitted to knowing little of women. He had been a thinker all his life, a deep, tireless student, and had it not been for the lonely circumstances of Letty Thorpe. and his need of a housekeeping companion, he would never have married. Her beauty had given him neither pride nor great pleasure. Indeed, after an absence from her of three months, when he had gone to Labrador with an exploring party, he had been amazed one day when writing to his wife to discover that he could not accurately recall the colour of her eves!

No doubt—his honesty acknowledged now—there were other things more elusive, more interesting, than a gray eye or a blue! There were traits and tastes which he did not even know, much less remember.

It had been during this very same long absence

that her intimate friendship with the other man had drifted into—love. The professor, in thinking, used the word quite calmly, and with measured precision followed the sequence. As he had done before, this evening he reached the climax less tranquilly, and his lips twitched. There were but two solutions; so he had decided for them both in Westminster: a divorce or—what the world calls forgiveness. Dagget chose the latter. There had been the question of his little boy.

As the child crossed the professor's mind at this juncture, there was no perceptible softening of his face. He did not necessarily care for children. They baffled him even more than women did. The baby had been a source of distraction in his quiet, noiseless house. His study had been changed to make room for the nursery, and even then there were times when the baby's crying had come to his ears. He had finally taken to writing in the College Faculty Library, and this called him more than ever away from home. He was forty years older than his son. When the boy came to enter college the professor would be an old man. Still, in the sight of the unscientific and living problem so difficult to reduce to exact quantities, he had not faltered. It was his own. He had a strong sense of responsibility towards the child, and he would do his best for him, at no matter what sacrifice. believed that this sacrifice involved that the home should not be broken.

The plan he had evolved for his wife's acceptance had been arbitrary and concise. She was to go with him to Europe for an indefinite length of time. They were to travel, and she was to leave her child

with Professor Dagget's unmarried sister. Hedged by these conditions, the woman might, if she chose, accept the forgiveness of her husband. She was pardoned, and only her maternal rights were for the time taken away. There had been no cruel rigour in his planning of the situation, and no intention to wound Letty's motherhood. At all events, his wife had consented to the plan. . . . Dagget had been writing logarithms in succession on the pages before him. . . . They were clear and exact, and to him beautiful, but his mind could not hold to them. His meditations had brought him to the day when he had told his decision to his wife. Unimaginative as he was, the time came before him as clearly as the geometric forms stood out before his eyes on the white page.

It had been an autumn Sunday afternoon, two months after his knowledge. Neither of them had been to church, for Professor Dagget was an atheist, and his wife had lost the habit of church observance. He had come over from the college library and into the house, to the upstairs sitting-room, where as a rule, when she was at home, he was in the habit of finding Letty with her sewing, her baby near her on the floor. On this day she was alone, neither sewing nor reading, idly standing at the window that looked down over the campus where the old trees were growing brown.

Nothing about her suggestive of either wife or mother spoke that day to the scientist. Whatever human feelings he had known towards her had been at the hour that her faithlessness declared itself to him suddenly sealed as though a giant boulder had been rolled against the source of a stream. He saw in her only the most difficult phase of the most difficult problem he had ever been called upon to consider. Almost without looking at her he had put his decision before her, and after speaking had gone over to the table, where he feigned to arrange some papers, leaving her time for reflection.

'If you go with me, Letty, we sail the day after to-morrow.' He remembered his words, and how singularly they had sounded in the quiet little sitting-room; and how much they meant. With the papers in his hand, Dagget had granted her quite ten minutes, and in the interval found the time to wonder what, in the event of her deciding to leave him, he would do with his house and his child. When she spoke he had started as at an unexpected sound. From where she stood, without turning from the window, Letty spoke as if she had been saying it to the campus and the trees:

'I will come with you.'

She had not tried to alter his decision about the child. Only once during the day she asked:

'Do you think your sister quite understands the care of little children?'

And he had readily replied:

'Oh, quite!'

Miss Mary Dagget was an old maid, and if Letty had chosen to leave him, the professor had decided to ask Miss Dagget to come and take charge of his affairs.

Nothing more had been said. He could not bring to mind any tears at the parting with the child, or any sign of grief, and yet she must miss it, he mused, she had been so continually with it; and this brought him to the present and to the fact that she was here

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with him, and installed, and he regretted that his quick, inadvertent look at table should have need-lessly wounded her.

Ш

The professor, when reading, had no idea of the passing of time. He thought he had just left his wife in the hall. He left his table and went across the room to the adjoining door and knocked, got no answer, saw that the door was ajar and the light bright. He called his wife's name, met with no reply, and went on into the empty room, where the bed had not been touched.

His first thought was that she had lingered in the reading-rooms or parlours of the hotel, and would presently come in. Then he looked at his watch. It was half-past two. A shock ran through him, more sharp and distinct than any sensation he had known in his life, and he stood blinking and staring at the empty bedroom and at the advanced hour. Where was she? Where could she be? Had she left him? Had she committed some desperate act in a mood which he could not understand? He felt it would be impossible to ring for hotel servants and let them enter upon the intimacy of this problem. Nevertheless, he was greatly disturbed. He waited for a long time before her window; he walked out into the quiet halls. There was nothing for him to do but to possess his uneasy soul in patience.

Towards five o'clock he went back to his own room and threw himself upon his bed, intending to sleep for an hour and then go out and make some effort to find his wife. The professor, in spite of his uneasiness, slept for more than an hour. When he awoke he started from his pillow: the broad sunlight streamed into his room. The door which he had left open between his wife's apartment and his own was closed. He sprang up and put his hand on the knob. He heard the sound of singing. It was Letty. She had a pretty, carefully trained contralto voice. He recognised at once that she was humming a little air with which she had been used to quiet her child. The professor, dazed as though everything which had transpired had happened to him in a dream, stood with troubled brows, holding on to the door for a few moments. Then he turned and went to make his morning toilet after his disturbing watch.

Pussy-cat's got on his snow-white shoes.

Pit-pat soft and slow.

Blue eyes, brown eyes, which shall I choose?

One, two, three, four—round we go!

In the adjoining room Mrs. Dagget finished a song of singular simplicity to come from the lips of a woman whose moral bias had created havoc in a university town. With the last notes she threw open the long window wide and went out on the balcony. Although it was only eight o'clock, the brilliancy of the sun cast an envelope of heat over the hillsides, and the soft, heavy air was warm as an American early summer day.

Below, along the hill's foot, and out on to the point, the lovely, multicoloured city spread itself, varied and gay, whilst toward it the bay brought its dazzling expanse of blue.

'It was as if some giant child had built it!' Mrs.

Dagget found it suggestive. 'Built a little city as near the sea as he dared, but it isn't the sea he needs to fear—it's that old villain!' and she glanced up at Vesuvius, whose plumes curled lazily in the still air.

This infantine reflection showed nevertheless that in one respect Mrs. Dagget differed from her spouse. Whilst the professor made accurate computations his wife made figures as well, of a different order.

In her hand, as she stood on the balcony, Mrs. Dagget held a little red leather book, which she opened, turning over the pages written in a fine feminine hand.

June 1, 1904. Henry Dagget, Jr., Born at Westminster, at 4 o'clock in the morning.

Henry Dagget, Jr., was christened in the College Chapel according to special request of the Class of 19—. He wore the same dress his father wore at his christening—real lace with a broad white sash. Although only two months old, Henry, Junior, smiled. Every one said he was beautiful. His mother thought he looked like a flower. The class gave him a loving cup filled with flowers.

Then followed, in words as softly written as if she had crooned them to the pages, the mother's record of Henry Dagget Jr.'s little life, until the book brought the pretty story to June 7, 1906, and then the entry ran:

To-day Henry Dagget, Jr., took leave of his father for a long time.

There was no word of herself—no word of her parting with her child.

For some time the professor's wife mused over what she had seen fit to enter in the Baby's Book,

of the tragedy of their three lives. It may have struck her, curiously, in reading, that she had not deemed herself worthy of mention in the farewell or separation, for there was an inscrutable smile around her pretty mouth as she passed over the few pages in the book of which the rest was a blank. In size and shape and colour, the book had a mate kept in Letty's desk drawer under lock and key. If she had intended making further entries in the volume she held-Mrs. Dagget was interrupted by the entrance into her room of the servant with the breakfast tray. When it had been set down on the balcony, and the awning dropped until the distant line of blue bay was all there was visible of Naples between the crimson fringe and the balcony rail, Letty regarded the outlay of little rolls, golden honey, pot of fragrant coffee, with satisfaction, and then going in and over to the professor's door she knocked softly.

'You haven't had breakfast yet, have you, Henry? I've ordered for both of us, and it's ready on the balcony. It's too lovely there—not hot yet. Won't you come?'

Dagget, who was putting the last touches to his toilet, looked up at his wife. She had thrown on a simple wrapper, her hair was done with care, and she was smiling cordially at him, as he had not seen her smile for a long time. The sunlight flooding the room, and the intonation of the woman's voice, were devoid of tragedy or of complications. She disappeared, leaving her husband storm-tossed: accusing, miserable, determined not to question her as to her absence from her room until she should force him to speak.

When, after a few moments, he started to join her,

he could, through the balcony window, see her sitting waiting before the breakfast things; her elbow on the little table, her chin in her hand, her look fastened on all that there was to be seen of the sea between awning and rail. Her pose, the expression of her face, were new to him, as much of Letty—all of Letty, he was beginning to discover—was new. As well as the little books of whose existence Professor Dagget did not dream, there were other things she kept under lock and key.

He handled the foreign newspapers, determining to make himself familiar whilst abroad with the political situation in France. He was growing daily conscious of how ignorant his close university existence had kept him of the march of European events. Eager as he was before any new field of study that presented itself, his eyes brightened as he followed down the first column of the *Figaro*. He was decidedly rusty. He would read French daily for an hour or so. When he laid the paper by his plate he said:

'You remember that I told you I had arranged to meet a certain Italian gentleman, il Signore di Braccia, at the Aquarium about eleven o'clock? He is the head of the Piscatological Society here, and it will be important to go over the Aquarium with him. I dare say he would have included you if he had known I was not alone. Would it interest you to go?'

Mrs. Dagget looked out into the bright vivid sunlight.

'I think I won't go, thank you, Henry. I slept badly last night. I think I'll rest a little, and I have letters to write.' She had, so he saw, American letters in her hand. For a second his wife's words struck Dagget with something short of horror. He knew that she had been out of her room till morning broke, but where and in pursuit of what pleasure he had no means to know. A chill went through him in spite of the summer day, and, like ugly memories of faces we are loth to remember, lines in a letter from a colleague, Professor Watson, came to him:

One can't travel away from sentiment, Dagget. Absence is sometimes, I believe, an aggravation of feelings, and what is to prevent Faverhill's following on the next boat?

'But you will go?' Letty spoke from the room. 'Don't trouble about me. I have plenty to do even if we are in a hotel!'

She had drawn up to a table and arranged her writing materials.

Dagget picked up his papers, folded them, and put them in his pocket. They represented not the more or less serious news of the day, but study and contemplation when he should be alone. But before the figure of the young woman at her writing he paused.

'You have letters from Mary?'

She was his sister.

'No.'

From whom, then, were they—this batch of envelopes? He did not know her correspondents, or, indeed, that any one wrote regularly to his wife. He had thought of none of her friends until forced to think of one. Now every one known and unknown in Letty's environment became mysterious to him.

Still in her flowing wrapper, she had taken her place before her table. Not far away was the broad bed, untouched as it had been all night, behind her the open window and the golden morning, and the table spread with the remains of the little domestic meal. Husband and wife, they waited there—for what? They were as far apart as the poles. There were their rooms, their common habitations; no one had a right to break in upon their intimate life, and yet at any moment one might enter without risk of surprising a furtive embrace.

Letty drew a sheet of paper towards her and dipped her pen in the ink. Dagget still stood irresolute. He was a disturbance to her quiet. Her nonchalance spoke against her, her eagerness to be at her letters troubled his suspicions. She waited for her husband to go.

'Letty?'

'Yes, Henry.'

But Dagget did not know what to say or what he wished to say. He could not stoop to question her yet.

'If you're so tired, why not, then, rest at once?'

He was awkward in this—sudden thoughtfulness for her, what she did or when she did it, so rarely occupied him. 'You would in that case be able to go out with me, perhaps, later; it's barely nine now.'

Letty shook her head.

'Oh, I've only a few notes to write, and I want them to catch this boat. I can sleep this afternoon.'

And he was obliged to go reluctantly; as he left she said: 'It will be hot at noon. You might wear your white clothes and your Panama, Henry; everything is in order.'

So they always were. Thanks to an inherent good taste in dress which no science or study had been able to affect, and to the care of a hand that was actuated by, let one say, interest, at least. Professor Dagget was the best-dressed man in Westminster! But it is safe to say that no savant keen with the pleasure of ciceroning a distinguished American through his beloved Aquarium ever conducted a more distrait visitor than was Professor Dagget, whose eyes, indeed, were on the creatures with fins, scales, wings, and tails, but whose thoughts were on a little woman in a loose morning gown, her brown head bent over her correspondence. Dagget's mind was on a little woman whose thoughts he would have rather read than master all the mysterious evolutions of the crustacean and molecular life whose characteristics glibly fell from the lips of his Neapolitan friend.

IV

LETTY DAGGET'S RED BOOK

WESTMINSTER, MASS., Feb. 2, 1903.

I suppose this is a nice enough boarding-house, but, never having been out of my own home, it seems dreadfully strange to me—dreadfully strange to sit down with fifteen people one has never seen before and break bread with them; to share with strangers whom one would never think of choosing as friends so sweet a thing as home! I don't like to write the word 'home' here; it's too sweet to me, too dear. I've a room about an inch wide, and my trunk, which is all there is of New Orleans left,

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stands out in the hall. There are no Southerners here. I'm glad. I wish I were the only Southerner in the world without a home.

WESTMINSTER, Feb. 5, 1903.

There are quantities of men everywhere, all young, and most of them look girlish, and they are all, of course, smooth-faced. Several come here in the evenings to call, and stay to supper, often. There are two pretty girls here. The other night the landlady asked me if I wouldn't stay down and have some music with them. I was so lonely that I accepted. We sang college songs, and I played for them on a bad piano, but it was better than another desolate evening alone in my hall room.

WESTMINSTER, MASS., Feb. 4, 1903.

I'm studying here. I'm to follow a general course of mathematics under the direction of a man I haven't seen as yet. Indeed, I haven't presented my letter to him. I'm afraid. Nobody has penetrated my solitude; not even the fifteen boarders have really disturbed it. All day I read and work in my room, and in the afternoon I take a walk up the college grounds way. The buildings are beautiful, built after the Oxford halls, and the parks and gardens would be lovely, only they are so cold and bare. Every stern man I see, I wonder if he is Professor Dagget.

WESTMINSTER, Feb. 6, 1903.

Professor Dagget (who, by the way, is the only man in Westminster with a moustache) is stern and

old. I learned this to-day from one of the Sophomores. They say he never smiles, and never speaks unless on a subject of mathematics, and he is so absent-minded and forgetful that he often goes out in winter without his hat. I asked if he were beloved by the students, and then Mr. Macy laughed at the word.

'Dagget beloved? Good Lord! Why, Miss Thorpe, he isn't unpopular, but you might as well speak of a *cube* or a *triangle* being beloved!'

WESTMINSTER, Feb. 7, 1903.

I've only money enough to stay here three months, and if I am to accomplish anything I shall have to send my letter to Professor Dagget. It has given me a bad headache to make myself decide. But if I flunk before seeing him, how shall I ever be able to start out all alone to face a whole world of Daggets, and worse! This place is less and less home to me; it grows terrifying. One of the seniors asked me to marry him; he is very rich, and doesn't look more than seventeen years old. But of course he is! Perhaps after years of drudgery in other people's houses I shall regret not having accepted him. But I can't now—when I am so young and think I know what it might be to love some day.

WESTMINSTER, Feb. 8, 1903.

Professor Dagget came to see me this afternoon. I received him in the general parlour, and one of the pretty girls was receiving two men in another corner. The professor stayed about seven minutes. He asked me my full name, my age, and everything I

had studied, and wrote it all down in a note-book Then he said:

'I am at liberty every afternoon from five to six. If it would meet with your plans, I will come myself and go over the branch of mathematics in which you most need to perfect yourself.'

My father and he were classmates, and Professor Dagget said: 'I remember your father' (as if it were one of the few things he really did remember!), 'and I shall be glad to do something for his child.' As Professor Dagget was the only human being who had said father's name for weeks to me, and is indeed the only human being on whom I have any claim in the world, I wanted to cry, but I knew he would have hated it.

During the seven minutes he stayed he never looked at me, but above my head, and when he went I felt sure he had seen me through and through, and nevertheless would have passed me without knowing me in the street!

WESTMINSTER, Feb. 10, 1903.

One of the pretty girls lends me her sitting-room every day from five to six. I have my lessons there. My head is hot and my feet are cold, and I haven't a very clear idea of anything during the hour, but afterwards, on thinking it over, I find it has been delightful! I never imagined mathematics could be poetical, but they can! They said I had a talent for it in school, and in the position which has been offered me it is required that I teach one girl of seventeen the highest branches. I feel like a Lilliputian in a giant sea at my lessons. I sink and choke, and the first thing I know, Professor Dagget

has pulled me up and lands me high and dry. It is very, very good of him to do this for me. It is wonderful, for he is a great student, and works night and day. When he teaches he no longer looks over you, but at you—through you, right into you, and yet it is so impersonal you feel that he sees only figures in place of the human face.

WESTMINSTER, Feb. 24, 1903.

I feel like saying that I have learned more with Professor Dagget in two weeks than in all my school life put together. I work terribly hard for him, nearly all the time between, and although I never liked study, I want to be prepared for him, and, then, I must be prepared, for I am to make my livelihood with this little brain and all the will I possess.

WESTMINSTER, Feb. 25, 1903.

Professor Dagget never asks me a question about myself. He has never since referred to father or to He doesn't think of me as an entity at all. He has called me several different names-Miss Brown, Miss Thomas (I wonder who they are?) and once he called me 'Mary,' and I still more wonder who she is! The other day as I was studying I stupidly scrawled 'Letty' all across the pages of my pad, and left it among the sheets of fresh copy I gave the professor. How could one suppose he would observe it?-but he must have done so, for he called me Letty. I don't know why, but somehow my heart stopped almost; coming from his formal lips, the name sounded so little and so strange. He did it twice! He called me Letty all through the hour, as if he had done so all his life—would do so

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all his life! For several days he continued, and then called me Miss Thorpe again, and I was as struck then by its strangeness as I had been by the other, and liked it less. I don't know where I ever found the courage, but I said:

'Won't you go on calling me Letty, professor? No one does, of course. It was father's name for me.'

He blushed, and, I believe, looked at me for the first time since we've met, and I saw that he was quite unconscious of having called me anything or of ever having spoken to me. Then he smiled, actually laughed very agreeably, and said of course he would call me Letty if he could remember; and he made a note of it, I guess, for he has been good about it, and only calls me Mary now and then! Mary is Professor Dagget's sister, older than he, and as timid and shrinking as he is cold and assured. She came to call.

WESTMINSTER, Feb. 27, 1903.

It seems to be a very simple thing to ask a woman to marry you. Another young man has done so. I have flowers ever day, and books and candy and notes and letters all the time. Neither of the pretty girls appear to harbour any jealousy or ill-will towards me. They take it as a joke, and giggle and make fun over it, and have renounced in one or two instances their rôle of flirting with their friends to play the part of confidante or confessor. They are all kind to me, too; and bring me books and flowers as well. The intense cold and snow keep me much indoors; I shrink from it horribly. This is nearly March. In the South it would be

already soft and warm. When I open my windows at home the air seems like a beautiful gift that comes in to me full of sweetness. Here there are no good smells. Cooking odours all through the house, and a dead, flat smell of *cold* out of doors.

WESTMINSTER, March 1, 1903.

I asked Professor Dagget if he thought I could take my position in June, and he told me he was not yet prepared to say. If I can't, I don't know what will become of me, because I've only enough money to last till then.

WESTMINSTER, March 2, 1903.

Professor Dagget is beautiful. His class would laugh if they read this! Above all, Mr. Macy, who said he was 'like a cube.' He is very tall and a little bowed at the shoulders. Big and spare, with a great nervous force. He has thick, dark hair, with only a thread or two of gray at the temples. He wears it very short, and it has the dull quality of a shadow. His forehead is as white as a girl's. He looks as if he had never known or seen or felt a care, and as if all his thought and meditation and study were concentrated in his eyes. They are wonderful, dark and clear, set under his brows which look like caverns. He wears very powerful glasses, and when they are off his eyes look childlike and rather melancholy, as if they were suddenly unprotected and at the mercy of the world. I can't describe features, but his are good, and his face is thin. He has a thick, short moustache, and his mouth is very stern and cold except when he smiles. I've only seen him smile twice, and I shall never forget the times.

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I have wondered what could come to him to waken often and at will that radiant look—and I have thought that it would be a wonderful happiness to be that cause.

v

Dagget's code of honour would not permit him to exercise any surveillance over his wife. His conception of what the ordinary etiquette of mental thinking required would not allow him now to pursue her with accusing thoughts, and he would not. so he said to himself, further doubt her. He had forgiven her, and this, as well as other things, meant that he must thenceforth believe her worth forgiving, and to be the person of character and fibre still worthy to make salvation of her his care. annoyingly, none of his theories, or high planes of principle, or rules—as to how human beings under certain conditions should comport themselvesserved Dagget any more in thinking of the woman whom he had left peacefully at her letter-writing task. He doubted her every thought. trusted every look and word whose significance was not plain as day. Would it bring him peace to dog her footsteps, to discover where she passed her time? -for she was scarcely ever within the hotel. Why should he not ask? He pardoned her not at alland why?

After the visit to the Aquarium, in order to pursue his thoughts in quiet, he had refused the escort of his Italian friend and returned alone to his hotel, slowly following along the promenade to the sea. The crowd, taking advantage of the cool brightness of the day, fanned by a strong sea breeze, poured itself about him: well-dressed men and women in little social twos or threes, the typical chattering Neapolitan throng of dandies and worldlings, enlivened now and then by the uniform of an officer, made picturesque by the dress of a priest. Smart little pony-carts, whose tall drivers sat with knees bunched up to the chin, flashed by. *Contadini* with donkeys, the rabble of beggars on foot, mingled with the careless and well-fed.

To the left spread the bay, and to the right Naples climbed up a hill, where the villas hid behind darkling cypress and pine. On a rocky ledge Dagget's hotel gave its terraces to the vision of the bay.

The troubled gentleman saw no more than usual of the street scenes and the crowd, generally ignored by a mind absorbed in accurate calculations.

How would he be forced to treat the problem before him? What was the outcome to be? Would there be an ultimate wreck? Had he done wrong in not procuring a divorce and leaving Letty free to pursue her life as she would? She had not wished it; she herself had chosen. If his son were destined to grow up beside them, what an atmosphere of estrangement his home would be!

Dagget had crossed over from the sea wall, and now took the promenade between the files of closely trimmed trees of the Piazza. There were quantities of children about—sturdy, dark-eyed, pretty little things, with gaily beribboned nurses.

The gentleman was obliged to stop short, for in front of him rolled a white mass of lace and muslin, as a wilful child threw itself violently down on the path in a passion of tears. The nurse, with much loud Italian ejaculation, gathered up the bundle of

kicking legs and laces, and the professor passed on; but his glance had rested a second on the struggling, crying child—a little boy some three years of age; it recalled his son, and yet he would scarcely have known his own in hat and coat, should he come upon him in the street unawares.

Dagget sighed, and, taking himself to task for an absorption both sentimental and emotional, vigorously pulled his mind in order and forced himself to think back to his late visit with the savant at the Aquarium. But with the apparition of the first glass apartment where the slow-moving fish brilliantly disported their ruby scales came the decision that a foot pace was too mild for his state of mind, and that for the hour at least, the habits of cephalopodi in the Bay of Naples were indifferent to him. He hailed a cab and told the cocciere to drive briskly to Bertolini's.

VI

LETTY DAGGET'S RED BOOK

WESTMINSTER, April 5, 1903.

I haven't seen Professor Dagget for days and days. He has been to Boston. The little break, the little absence, shows me how much the friendship—if I can call it so—has been. I have lived for that one hour now for weeks. It made a circle, and the other twenty-three hours went heavily around it.

WESTMINSTER, April 7, 1903.

On Easter every one had been out to church to see the flowers, and I had not left my room all day. It was very warm for the season, and everybody wore new spring clothes. I had none. I couldn't even get a new hat, and I felt poor and shabby in my winter black.

Professor Dagget came at three o'clock, and asked me if I would like to take a walk with him. He was very kind. He talked delightfully about many things. I never knew he had another thought beside mathematics. Then, all of a sudden, he dropped into his habitual silence, and never spoke once again until he left me at the boarding-house.

WESTMINSTER, April 28, 1903.

For some time my lessons have gone shockingly. I don't seem able to prepare them-far less recite them. This street is bordered with elms, and, although it is late April, there isn't a leaf out, and it is black and cold. There have been flurries of rain and even snow, but yesterday in the afternoon the sun shone quite warmly, so that I opened my window, and when Professor Dagget came I was sitting in the soft, delicious air and sunlight. Sometimes he forgets to take his hat off for a long while, sometimes he forgets his book. He never has a pencil ready, and once he carried away my handkerchief in his pocket by mistake. I could have laughed about it if it had been one of the students. but not with him. To-day there was a bunch of primroses on the table, that one of the pretty girls had sent me. Wonder of wonders, Professor Dagget saw them!

'I didn't know that there were any—' (he called them by their botanical name) 'out yet. Spring comes late in Westminster.' I told him that he should see New Orleans now, that it was glowing like summer. He said that he thought the South was de-vitalising, and I told him I thought the North was 'be-numbing.' He waited a little and then repeated:

'Benumbing to what?'

And I didn't know quite how to answer, so I said: 'To everything like feeling.'

After a few moments he said:

'I never had my brain work better than in Labrador, where I went with a party of scientists. I did four times my usual amount of work, and the thermometer was below zero.'

Sometimes I am sure that he hasn't a human feeling in his breast, and it makes me suffer to think it. Then I realise how very patient he has been with me, and how his cleverness must have been taxed, and I remember, above all, his smile, and I feel that under the hard, stern, methodical scientist there is another man, and . . .

WESTMINSTER, April 30, 1903.

Professor Dagget has asked me to marry him. The last time we had lessons, he left the house without his hat, and he was in the street when I discovered it. Then he did not come at all for several days, and sent no word. On Saturday afternoon, when I had been waiting an hour before my window, watching the trolley cars and the passers-by, he came in. I got out my pen and my books to work, but he said: 'I am not going to work with you to-day, Letty.' I can remember every word he said. Nothing has meant so much to me in all my life—of course—of course.

'Next month you go to Brookline to the position you told me of?'

I said yes, if he thought I was prepared.

'You tell me you are not nineteen years old?'

'I shall be in a few weeks.'

'I have another proposition to make you. You can think it carefully over and give me your answer on Monday. Would you consider marrying me and living here in Westminster? I have inherited some money—enough to make a comfortable home for you. In a year or two I shall resign from my position, and carry on my private research work. I am twenty years older than you are, but in many ways I am a young man. My father lived to be ninety-three.' He got up here. 'On Monday I will come to hear your answer at the usual hour, unless you send me a note telling me not to come.'

When he got to the door I asked him to stop a moment.

I told him that it wasn't necessary for me to have till Monday, that I knew now what the answer would be.

He looked startled and surprised. 'I would rather you thought it over,' he urged; 'but if you at once feel sure—.'

I said I felt quite sure, and that if he wanted to marry me I would try to be a good wife.

I know that he didn't love me in the least, that he married me from kindness, from pity, because he saw I was too stupid and too timid to make my way in the world alone; because I was his friend's desolate orphan child. I knew that he never even dreamed that it was—might be—a sacrifice of my youth; that he never even wondered if I cared, had

ever cared, for any one; and I said in spite of all that I would marry him.

I have no wedding clothes, not even a new wedding dress. He says we will be married in the Episcopal Church, and that we will go to Boston and prolong his Easter vacation, as there is a certain professor there he wants to see.

I shall never wait for him any more to come at four o'clock to hear my stupid recitals. I shall never sit on Elm Street and watch for him to come. He will be at home, where I am, and with all my soul and strength I will try—try—to—be a good wife to my husband.

VII

In Naples, following his meditations, poor Dagget fatuously said to himself: 'If I only knew how she felt—what she did! If only I understood, I could then forget and continue my work and life, and let her lead her own.'

If he only knew what? What did he wish to know? That here in Naples she was continuing her friendship with Faverhill? That he had come from America to her? It was incredible of them both! But in case of such knowledge, he could then part from her irrevocably, at once, which would of course signify that he could take up his interesting work in peace. Or did he wish to be certain that she was wretched and unhappy? That she grieved for her child? Could he, then, in that case, forget? It was not so simple! He had thought that the fact of his pardon presupposed a faith in her, and

precluded—given the fact that she had chosen to break the chain of her dishonour—that he should ever speak to her of the past, or even let her surmise a doubt. He must, at whatever cost, live up to this contract. Not entirely because his work dragged, or because the solitude of his room became for the first in his whole life intolerable, nor because he felt a sense of duty toward her now that he had thus planned their close companionship in this foreign town, but for other reasons, the professor began to seek Letty's society.

'Would you care,' he suggested, 'to do a little reading with me?'

'It would make me think of Mrs. Ransom's boarding house in Elm Street'—she smiled. 'You will remember it—the sitting-room, with all the photographs of students around? Ah, those long winter afternoons!' Letty seemed to muse. 'And how cold it was, after the South! And how I used to listen to the whirling wind and to the driving storms!'

Mr. and Mrs. Dagget sat over their dessert in the glass-covered dining-room, a metropolitan, cosmopolitan world around them. The room was warm, but Letty shivered as she spoke of Westminster. Dagget felt a pang, and the expression of his wife's mobile face, whose lights and shadows were beginning to be an agreeable, puzzling study for him, was one of keen sadness.

'You found them, those days, then, so long, Letty?'

'Oh, yes,' she said gently; 'you were there only an hour, you see, and before it and after it there were twenty-three of them, all one colour. The South is so different, and I was always with my father; he made a companion of me—a friend. I adored him,' she said. 'I adored my father.'

Dagget, as the tone of her voice came to him soft and sweet, was carried to the realisation that he had never heard her speak like this before; never heard her speak of herself, of any intimate feeling. The extreme term, 'adoration,' fell warmly from her lips—sad as was the connection, she evidently loved to say it. He felt a sharp sting of jealousy at the word, a singular need of it—a wish for it, as if he saw given to another a jewel which he suddenly coveted. If she said it like this in filial affection, what had she said, and with what passion, to the man she loved?

Letty lifted her head and looked out now through the window.

'I like it here, it's so gay and bright. Everybody seems to be enjoying life—not puzzling out how to live, and whether it is right or wrong to have a good time! Have you noticed the faces of the people one sees? They are all smiles and animation. And the soft, wonderful air, so full of delicious smells. To me, America has no smell but cold. I would like to live in Italy.'

Dagget put down the apple he was peeling, took off his glasses, wiped them, and, putting them back, stared at his wife. Her enthusiasms! She had them, then! Live in Italy! He had not observed the Neapolitan faces other than to think them a self-indulgent, luxurious, idle people, behindhand in civilisation, slow in commerce. But the face before him was, for the first perhaps in his life, clear before his eyes. It was mobile, sensitive; her thoughts

and feelings passed as quickly over it as sun and shadow over a rippling pool.

'The strongest influence,' Dagget said, 'in Italy at present is the North American republic.'

Mrs. Dagget murmured softly: 'And the strongest influence on this North American is Italy.'

He returned to his subject. 'You haven't told me whether or not you will enjoy reading something.'

'I should like to study Italian,' she continued to play with his question. 'There is a good teacher here. Don't you think I might take a few lessons?'

VIII

LETTY DAGGET'S RED BOOK

PARKER HOUSE, BOSTON, May 8, 1903.

This is my wedding day. I was married in Westminster at noon. I wore a brown dress for travelling, and a brown hat with violets. I think I must have looked a great deal older than nineteen. I tried to, for the professor's sake. On the train coming here Henry-I am to call him so-read letters and made notes, and now he has gone to meet some gentleman from Cambridge. It is six o'clock, rainy and cold again. There is not vet a touch of spring in the air. Indeed, it feels like snow. They tell me at the North that when spring in certain seasons comes late, it comes with a rush, with a sudden surprise, and that it is all at once warm as summer. I have no one to write to except some school friends. I am quite alone in the world, and all my life depends on him. Although he does not love me, I am not yet unhappy. There were

beautiful letters written to Professor Dagget, and I had some lovely marriage gifts, and the house he has bought for our home is on a hill overlooking Westminster. Not far away Henry's best friend, Jack Faverhill, has a beautiful place. My husband wore a grey suit at his wedding, and he looked handsome and distinguished and very absent-minded. I believe half the time he forgot where he was! There were only a few members of the faculty there, and their wives. The oldest of the pretty girls was my bridesmaid, and afterwards, when we were alone a few moments before going away, she cried and I knew how she felt, and I told her it kissed me. wasn't the sacrifice that it seemed to her in any way. and not to cry. for I was not at all sad.

'You ought to be, poor darling!' she said. 'Don't you realise—don't you know what life is?'

If I had been melancholy, it would not have been much help to me to have her talk like that! I only kissed her and thanked her for all her kindness, for the room she lent me for my lessons, for her friendship. But I couldn't help but wonder if she knew what life was half so well as I, who felt it over me like the tide of a sea that carried me to an unknown port. . . . I shall write her and tell her that Boston is cheerful and spring-like, and not let her hear the echo of the rain on the hotel windows, or see the shadow of the heavy sky across the page.

Mr. Faverhill was the best man, and he seemed as gay as if it were his wedding. He 'jollied up' Henry, as he called it, and seems devoted to him. After the wedding he put us on the train and said:

'Please thank or scold me, as the case may be, Mrs. Dagget, if your Boston quarters aren't quite right. I'm the one in charge, and I hope you'll be comfortable.'

There was the same look of pity that the pretty girl gave me, and I hated it from him. The rooms he had chosen for us are quite sumptuous: a parlour, where I am sitting, and the bedrooms with a bath between. We are to dine here, and I shall be face to face alone with my husband, with whom I have never broken bread before. His timid little sister was not at the wedding; she is travelling in Europe, and will not be home for some months.

PARKER HOUSE, BOSTON, May 10, 1903.

We did not dine alone after all. At eight o'clock Henry came in with another gentleman, an old man about sixty, I should say, gray-haired and very gentle, and more distrait even than my husband. He is a celebrated German biologist, and he sails for Germany to-morrow. He spoke no English, and Professor Dagget and he talked German all through dinner. I left them at ten o'clock enveloped in a cloud of cigar smoke and talking through the haze. I think he must have stayed till past midnight, for the clock struck one when I heard Professor Dagget go to his room.

IX

LETTY DAGGET'S RED BOOK

WESTMINSTER, April 1904.

I have been married eleven months. It took a long while to settle and furnish the house, for Henry had

things that his ancestors fetched from England, and some old furniture from Haverhill that belonged to his father. It is the prettiest house in Westminster, I think; on a hill, with quite a garden, and not far from the university. Henry has only a few minutes' walk. Everybody has been kind to me—too kind, for if I liked I could be always out to teas and clubs and socials, and all sorts of amusements. Every woman here has some hobby besides her home. Henry leaves me quite free to join clubs or not, as I like, so I joined a literary circle which meets weekly, and that is all.

Henry's friends, the Faverhills, are charmingat least, Jack Faverhill is; his wife is an invalid. I think she is insane. No one seems to think Mr. Faverhill's duty is at home, and he is never there. He seems devoted to my husband, and every Sunday night he comes to supper, and often in the week, too. The Seniors come to call ridiculously often. I asked Henry if he objected, and he said that, on the contrary, it was a good influence for the fellows. One of the men who asked me to marry him is here on a post-graduate course. He says he returned to be near me. He makes doleful and melancholy love to me, and it is very amusing! The professors' wives all have children, and every one is absorbed in the gossip of the college. would often be at a loss for something to do if it were not that I continue to read and to study. Henry is up at frightful hours. I hear him in his room at five o'clock; some nights I believe he does not go to bed at all. He hardly knows any of the rooms except his study, which I am the only person allowed to dust, for fear of disturbing his papers. There are moments, actually, when I regret Mrs. Ransom's boarding-house and the four o'clock lessons, because then Henry belonged to me for an hour at least, and couldn't escape! I appreciate, as I see his busy life, how kind it was to give me that regular daily time. I have been so poor for years that it seems wonderful not to have to make my own clothes and to worry about cuts and styles. Henry allows me to give to charities here, and that pleases me, too, very much indeed.

I have no means to know whether or not my husband is happy with me, or regrets his marriage. because he never talks or addresses half a dozen words to me. I never trouble him with myself. am sure he would not know if I were in the house or not. The time of the week when he most seems to thaw is on Sundays, when Jack Faverhill comes to tea. Mr. Faverhill is not a student, but he is a very clever man, and he makes Henry talk, and he talks to Henry. It is a delight when Henry will consent to leave his own subject and touch another! I wonder that, hemmed in by mathematics as he is. anything else has ever penetrated his absorption, but it seems he is informed on almost every subject. I sit and listen, and love Jack Faverhill for what he does for Henry. I could easily imagine a woman marrying Henry for his mind alone, as other women have married savants and men of letters, and as the pretty girls of the class of 19-, and, of course, Jack Faverhill, think, I married my husband!

I went away and stayed two nights at the Faverhills'. Mrs. Faverhill was very ill, and they sent for me. I purposely didn't tell Henry, for I wanted to see if he would telephone me, but he never even asked where I was, and when I came home and told him I had been gone forty-eight hours he couldn't believe me. He is finishing his book, and it will make a great deal of stir—as much as any mathematical work ever does, Faverhill says.

There is no one in Westminster like Henry. The fellow who said he wasn't beloved is wrong, for I see how he is adored. His classes are the fullest in the college, and the best worked for. His salary has been advanced, they are so afraid they will lose him. In a year or so he will retire and carry on his work quite independently. He has been interested, too, in biology for many years, and I think that is what he intends to pursue. He shines out like a star among the other professors, and I know they are a little jealous of him. He speaks French and German, and is a wonderful Latin scholar. I compare him with lack Faverhill-lack has a keener and weaker face, but he is very handsome, too. He has a sense of humour, has travelled everywhere. and he has always time for me-more than I will accept.

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Dagget was perplexed to see how the routine of their life in Naples, so capably planned by him, was being controlled now by the woman. Mrs. Dagget it was who decided whether they should go to Pompeii, or whether her husband, with some archæologists, should pursue his studies and his enjoyment of antiquities without her. Letty, loving Italy as she professedly did, seemed to find Naples, the hotel, and an occasional walk on the esplanade, all the diversion she needed. She haunted the shops in the Via Chiaia, the first European bazaars she had ever seen; bought herself some ravishingly pretty things; sometimes sang like a bird in the room next to her husband's, and sometimes he knew that she wept. Nevertheless, during the ordeal—the time which for her he felt should be a period of repentant self-condemnation and wifely devotion, when she should have tried to make him forget—Letty it was who flowered, who bloomed! She grew more lovely every day, and seemed to reflect the careless spirits of the natives whom she found so sympathetic.

Dagget, sleepless, nervous, desoriente, and miserable, wore all the symptoms of the culprit, and it was he who seemed the real victim of exile. Since the night when, on opening the door, he had found his wife to be absent from her room, he had never, after they bade each other good-night, opened that door again. He preferred not to know.

After futile experiments with work, he gave up all idea of writing, and relinquished himself to the task of winning his Letty's confidence. He put away his papers and his books, and his bare room became desolate to him. He went to the English library and bought a collection of Italian sketches, and determinedly, as one might put a great hand down over a butterfly, laid hold of Letty one day, and imprisoned her on the balcony, that he might read to her, willy-nilly. She sat near him in a low chair, the afternoon sun filling her hair. Her hands were busy with a bit of sewing—a garment for her child. The professor, who had not opened a book of this

character since he was a young man touring in Europe, read aloud a sentimental, loosely-written story of travel among the Umbrian cities. Indifferent as the matter was, it began to entertain him. The contact with thought so unlike his own was interesting, and after a few pages the aspect and atmosphere of the cities described charmed him as the subject never could have done in Westminster—as it could, indeed, never have done if he had not been lately emancipated from his hard routine, if he had not lately been sensitive to other things than facts, if his feelings had not been for the first in question! At a Latin poem quoted on the paper, he paused, read it in the original, then ably translated it.

'How beautifully you read, Henry!'

He actually coloured. 'I haven't, I should say, read aloud in twenty years—not since I read aloud to my father, who was blind. Since you're so good as to compliment me, I'll read often.'

'How I should like to see that Umbrian country! How lovely it sounds!'

The professor turned the leaves and found another sketch.

'Here's a bit about Orvieto.'

But Mrs. Dagget had gathered up her work, and now rose.

'Why, you're not tired, Letty? We haven't read an hour.'

She answered from the balcony door.

'I have to go out a little while. I have an appointment in the Via Chiaia, and there's just time before dinner.'

Dagget leaned forward.

'Come and sit down again for a quarter of an hour,

until I read this one sketch. It's a good plan to go on when one is in the mood, you know.'

His wife smiled—the terrible smile of those who quite appreciate how much they are wanted, and at the same time quite intend to take themselves away.

'I'm sorry. I can't, really! It's almost five.'

Dagget shut the book and followed her into the room. As he did so, he did not know himself. It was another Henry Dagget to the one who had been agreeably reading aloud, who entered the room where his wife was already making her preparations for going out.

Dagget did not speak. He felt as if a sea, hot and tempestuous, had surged through him up to his lips, and until he could dam it back he could not trust his voice.

It was a simple thing enough that Letty should go out. He did not want her to go. It was a simple thing that after an hour's reading she should plead an engagement made long before. He wanted her to remain.

She had put on her hat and veil.

'Letty.'

His voice to himself sounded like a very young voice, high-tuned and thin.

'Yes, Henry.'

'I don't want you to go out.'

She did not turn from before the mirror until she had fastened her white veil over her face; under it her cheeks were pink as roses.

'Are you ill, Henry?'

He could almost have pleaded that excuse.

'Not at all; but I should prefer that you remain.'

The colour deepened in her cheeks, she took up without reply her gloves and her parasol. He watched her.

'You're going, then?'

He stepped towards her. The professor of mathematics, cold icicle that he was, the 'cube,' the 'angle,' was so mastered by a feeling that he could not classify and pigeonhole, that he was like a child under the first storm of passion. He wanted to seize his wife by her delicate wrists, pinion her, say: 'You shall not go! I am your husband. Where are you going—to whom, and what? I must know—I shall know!'

Letty spoke coldly:

'I have an engagement; there is no reason why I should break it.'

Her eyes were beautiful and hostile, and she met his with what he felt was dislike, and in a second the look set him free as nothing else could have done. He seemed ridiculous to himself.

'You're not going to keep me by force, Henry?'

He bit his lip, stepped aside to let his wife pass him, and the door had closed after her some several minutes before he stirred.

ΧI

LETTY DAGGET'S RED BOOK

WESTMINSTER, April 1904.

Jack loves my singing, and it is such a pleasure to sing for him by the hour. He plays delightfully, and fetches me the new songs. Last night Henry was in Boston at a Harvard entertainment, and Jack came to dinner. After coffee, when we were sitting in the drawing-room, 'Letty,' he said, 'aren't you a very unusual woman?'

I told him that it seemed as if he must doubt it, since he so put the question.

'No,' he said, 'but I thought you would help me decide—and you will eventually; what I mean is, you seem so serene and so good for no reason whatsoever.'

Of course I asked him what he meant, and if I had not every reason for contentment.

'No,' he said abruptly; 'you have nothing! I knew Henry Dagget in Vienna, before he had turned into a stone—petrified. A more charming, delightful companion I never knew. If any one had told me he would fossilise like this . . .! I hadn't seen him for years until I came here just before your marriage to him. Then I saw the change, and saw you too, Letty.' He waited and did not go on with the sentence. 'You are unusual, extraordinary—or else you are as senseless as he is.'

'Jack,' I said, 'you find me always happy.'

'No,' he interrupted.

'You find me always tranquil, at least, and that is perhaps better—and I don't want you to discuss my life.'

'You could be so happy, Letty!' He seemed to plead for it, to want it for me. 'So radiantly, wonderfully happy.'

'Come,' I begged him—'come, Jack, and let us sing.'

He had brought me a beautiful new song, which he played for me, reading the words as he played.

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WHEN SPRING COMES LATE

When spring comes late on field and bough,
And winter seems to claim the year;
When birds are hushed, and no songs fill
The barren orchards, and the drear
Rain lingers crying at the pane,
And barren days come back again.

When spring comes late, let you and me Find comfort in each other dear,
Nor seek the blossoms on the tree,
Nor music save our hearts to hear;
But find our being's whole content
In our full loving's wonderment.

When he had finished, his eyes seemed to ask me a thousand questions; and I could not tell him my thoughts, or what the words of the song meant for me. But spring is sure to come, and it is like summer when it does come, and worth waiting for all the frosty year.

WESTMINSTER, May 8, 1904.

I have been married twelve months to-day. For most of the time there has been a bewilderment of my senses, a sort of sleep upon me. I feel as if I were blindfolded, and Henry were leading me wherever he would, to something we neither of us knew; but when the bandage slips I know I shall be in a beautiful place.

My husband breakfasts alone in his study, very early; before he goes to the university, he has already done several hours' work. I disturb none of his habits; I hardly come near his life, and certainly not into it. From my window I see him go over to the college at the hours of his lectures. He has a

congenial study in the university buildings, and prefers writing there to here, where everything is new as yet, and where I am the newest of all—he isn't used to me. He is home for luncheon, as a rule, and we are usually alone. Many meals pass without his addressing a word to me. Sometimes he fetches his pamphlets to the table and reads throughout lunch; sometimes he forgets to eat and fasts till late afternoon.

Jack Faverhill says Henry is one of the great minds of the country, and that he will make some biological discoveries of value when he goes really into the work.

WESTMINSTER, May 20, 1904.

Little Mary Dagget stares at me as if I were some kind of specimen Henry had brought home, and which she could never understand. She is timid and faltering, and at everything I do or say she exclaims: 'Why, Letty!' She is in a state of constant astonishment at something or other all the time.

Last night I waited in Henry's study until he should come home. It was a bold thing for me to venture. I put on my prettiest dress, and sat in the window. He came in quickly and with such an expression of strained thought that I was terrified lest he should suddenly see me and be interrupted. I never moved. I scarcely breathed, and sat until I ached in every bone and muscle. He worked for a long time before his table, and I watched him, fascinated at his face and its absorption. When I couldn't endure the cramped tension of keeping so still any longer, I got up softly and spoke his name.

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He looked up as if he were in a charmed sleep, as if he saw me through a haze. He didn't speak to me, and as quickly as I could I passed out of the room.

July 1, 1904.

I cling to Mary Dagget. I want her always there. I watch her knitting work—ugly, dark, deformed-looking articles for charity boxes. Over the gray, dull work her little face is pinched and docile, and her timid eyes are lost behind double glasses. Whilst she sits and works I talk to her as I have not been able to talk for months. I have told her all about my Southern home, and father, and I have made her tell me all about Henry and his childhood. She brought him up—she is fifteen years older than he.

July 2, 1904.

These souvenirs of Henry's youth, which Mary Dagget has told me as I lie on my divan in the corner of the sitting-room, are all she has of life or experience; yet I don't believe she has ever talked to Henry. She admires and reveres him, and is awfully afraid of him. How I ever dared to marry him, is, I am sure, a constant wonder to her!

July 4, 1904.

It is three months since I went to Henry's library and tried to talk with him. Several times I have tried to speak to him alone, in vain. There have been two German friends of his staying here with us for a fortnight. Henry is making some expert researches for a pamphlet which these professors are to read before the Vienna convention. Jack

Faverhill is very sarcastic about the poor German gentlemen. He says they were not like that when he went to Germany as a student.

No one but Jack Faverhill has observed that I am pale and troubled. I think I could simply fade out of life before Henry's eyes, and he would never know that I had existed. To-day Mary Dagget, when she had finished her knitting, brought out a fresh bundle of ugly brown yarn, but before she unrolled it I said to her:

'Don't wind it, Mary.'

She looked in great surprise through her double glasses.

'I've got some other work for you to do'; and I brought out some skeins of pale blue and white and pink wools.

'My dear Letty! What foolish colours!'

'Not foolish for some garments, Mary, and you're so clever with your fingers and your needles.' I came over and sat down by her side. 'Will you knit me some little things—some very little things?'

She flushed all over her pale old cheeks.

'Why, Letty-why, Letty!'

'Yes-yes . . .' I was crying then.

And she was very gentle and put her arms around me, and I felt the mother heart of her as I put my head on her thin breast.

After a while I said:

'Mary, I want you to tell Henry for me.'

'He doesn't know!'

'No, I have tried to tell him, but he—he has no time for me, Mary.'

'My dear child, don't say that! You must tell your husband.'

- 'I can't now.'
- 'Why, Letty?'
- 'I could have—I wanted to do so, but I can't now. He doesn't love me enough.'
- 'Letty, you are the only woman who has ever been in Henry's life.'
 - 'I'm not in it.'

I saw how it disturbed her, and consoled her, but made her promise to tell my husband for me that I am to be a mother.

WESTMINSTER, May 8, 1905.

To-day was the second anniversary of our wedding. Henry remembered it no more than he did the first, but Jack Faverhill did! He brought me a flowering azalea, because I had said I liked them, and when this one is faded I am to have another. Jack said: 'I want you always to have a flowering plant in this room, Letty. You came from a country of flowers: you must miss them.' I do, and the winters here are so cruelly long! The big blaze of this splendid tree Jack brought me fills the room with its sun. It is a pinky-yellow Japanese azalea. The baby put his little hands out to it and laughed as if it were the sun; it seemed to dazzle him.

WESTMINSTER, May 20, 1905.

The baby looks like Henry, but he has my nature, which means that he will suffer. But he will also be able to make some one very happy, as I am sure I could. So far, at least, I have made my husband need me. I keep his house, and rear his son, and take care of his accounts. But as a woman I am apparently indifferent to him. Little Mary

Dagget would take my place if I were not here. She would rather be ignored by Henry than remembered by some one else.

Since Mr. Faverhill comes so often and so regularly, the students come less. He is always here. The little college clique is very conventional, and I am sure his constant visits are criticised. I spoke to Henry of it one day. 'Don't you think Jack comes too often, Henry?'

'Too often for whom?'

'It seems to me---'

Henry interrupted. 'Does he come too often for you?'

'No; you see, I am so much alone, he entertains me.'

'Well, then'—he smiled indulgently—'that's all that is important'; and he went on with his book.

Mr. Faverhill came in that very evening, and we played and sang for two hours. Henry was writing in the next room, and after Jack had gone I asked Henry if we had disturbed his quiet.

He looked up at me, dazed.

'Music? I heard none—Letty, you see what a boor a mathematician is!'

Not a boor, but what he misses!

Sometimes there is a look on my husband's face which if I could transfix for a moment would make him a beautiful human man; then it fades and is lost in his abstractions. When we are all three together, Henry becomes quite animated, and as he smiles and I see the illumination of my husband's face I crave more deeply to be able to light that torch myself; but how? I have never talked with him for half an hour. There is a wall between us. He scarcely knows his child. But, in spite of all,

would I rather be forgotten by Henry than remembered by another man? No . . . I wish to be remembered by Henry. That is what I intend to be before it is too late.

WESTMINSTER, May 21, 1905.

The university is sending Henry to Labrador with other celebrated scientists. The journey is in connection with his biological interests. He will be gone three months. He is going to-morrow, and only told me of it to-day. He forgot to tell me before. I cried a great deal, which of course he did not know. Three months is so long, and Labrador is so far! I would have liked to have this evening alone with him, but Jack Faverhill came, and I had to leave them together and go to arrange Henry's things. It took me all the evening, and it was midnight when I came into the study. Jack was still there. I went up to my husband and put my hand on his shoulder.

'Won't you take me with you, Henry?'

He started as if I were an utter stranger who had pleaded to go.

'Why, it's a man's party, my dear Letty. There are no comforts for women.'

'I don't want any comforts.'

I knew that Jack was looking at me eagerly, and that he was amazed at my request.

'Of course you are not serious? It's quite out of the question to take you, Letty.'

'Then, don't go.'

Henry turned full around to look at me. He seemed as embarrassed as if I were a wilful child who was making him trouble. Jack laughed at him.

'You're certainly not easily flattered, Dagget, I must say. I wish some woman cared a hang where I went or what I did.'

He got up—I was grateful to him, and said before him to my husband: 'Don't you know it's dangerous to leave a woman all alone for months?' And whether he meant to rebuke me for my vulgarity, or was really as blind as the words implied, Henry said:

'You have neighbours, a burglar alarm, and a telephone.'

And Jack laughed. 'Yes, Letty, and you have me—I will look out for you.'

When we were alone and the door had shut behind him, leaving us alone at last, Henry asked:

- 'Is there a fire in the study, Letty? It was cold last night.'
 - 'Yes.'
- 'Then I shall go to work. I have a dozen things still left to do.'
- 'But you'll be exhausted... and you start away so early, Henry.'
 - 'I can rest on the train.'

I left him at his study door, and he kissed me on the cheek and bade me good-night. 'I shall write as often as the mails go out from Labrador, and if you need anything, call on Faverhill.'

XII

The professor's equilibrium, extraordinarily disturbed, was slow to adjust itself. He was humiliated by the lack of control he had exhibited, still more

overcome with surprise at the woman's will that had daunted him, at Letty's lack of consideration for his feelings, her cold refusal, and, above all, at a desire which in the face of determination on his part, whose very existence must be new to her, had made her pursue her own pleasure contrary to her husband's wish.

He wandered about the room his wife had left, profoundly troubled. How was it possible that a man who had been eminently equal to the situations of life hitherto should fail before the problem of a mere woman! But Dagget had a false appreciation of the relative difficulties of the situation, a total ignorance of human nature, and, above all, of the vagaries and subtleties of sex. The riddles of romance, even current events, were shut out from him by the close, painful application of years to one subject, and his devotion to a hobby. The man whom Letty's diary called her husband's best friend had said: 'You would be an interesting man in any walk of life, Dagget. You have more possibilities than you know, and, curiously enough, you have chosen the one profession in which you can be the least interesting to others!'

Whether or not he was interesting, Dagget decided that he was dull, and that before the beautiful woman who by law and Gospel belonged to him he was a failure.

Letty's things lay all about the room. They were simple, for, although his income was large, their expenditures were regulated with economy as far as luxuries were concerned. Here and there were different objects of her wearing apparel. Thrown on the bed was her little blue wrapper. The bureau top

bore many feminine accessories to toilet, and Dagget in his walk regarded them with more than usual interest. A picture of the child in Letty's arms, a picture of her own mother—a sweet old miniature—were the ornaments. The elderly Southern lady had Letty's dark hair, her gentle eyes with less fire in them, Letty's full, lovely mouth, with more control in the lines. But she was an older woman than the one who, smiling and charming, held her baby in her arms. Letty looked very happy in the picture, very proud of the treasure she held.

This, Dagget reflected bitterly, was his wife, the mother of his son! No wonder they called her pretty Mrs. Dagget—even beautiful Mrs. Dagget. She was a very beautiful woman. He had never remarked it—and what had she done with her beauty and his honour?

Dagget put the picture down. A sharp spasm of pain contracted his muscles, and counter emotions rushed across the virgin field of his nature, trampling it, rending it, a host thousands strong. He knew little or nothing of women. He had been a lonely boy, a lonely, intense student, a close-thinking, absorbed man, and yet as nothing had ever before held his attention, the little creature in Mrs. Ransom's boarding-house had made him think about her, had ensnared his interest and held it more than she or he was ever aware. Letty Thorpe had taken form until out of the labyrinth of problems she became a vivid illustration on the dull printed pages. As she had sat over her work, her pretty, soft figure, pliant, adorable, bent over the sheets of paper and her books, as every now and then she looked up at him, following his words with close attention, she penetrated his absorption, and the eternal feminine spoke to him—imperiously, appealingly. And Dagget believed now as he mused that he had married her because he wanted her, and not because, as he had then argued, he wanted to protect her from the world and to do his duty by her father's memory. Musing still, there rushed upon him the recollection of one night in the first year of their married life. He had been absorbed in bringing to a close an important volume destined to find place as text-book in the Oxford and Cambridge Universities, and to win for him an English and Scotch decoration.

Letty had kept his home for him, quietly, capably, and well. Sweetly presiding at the end of his table at meals, softly moving through his house, she had been before him many months whilst he remained as unconscious of her as one is of the atmosphere, of the comfort and wellbeing of home, and the agreeable objects which one enjoys without even being grateful for them. On the especial night he now recalled. his book's last proof had been sent off to the printer, and he wandered home across the campus and up the hill in the mild April night. That season the summer had suddenly and capriciously come with a rush, and the weather was warm. He had dined. as a great honour to them, with a class fraternity, and it was after twelve o'clock when at last he went Windows and doors all open, the house seemed deserted. No one was on the porch or in the parlour, or in the great rooms as he went through them. His study—his natural haunt—where, shut in for weeks and months, he had toiled like a slave, did not tempt him, and rather impatiently he turned from it, and in passing cautiously, so that if she were

asleep he might not disturb her, he opened the door to Letty's room. . . . Letty's room—he hardly ever crossed its threshold! The full moon's quiet light flooded it—he remembered how it lay on the cold white bed and on the floor. Letty, who lay on the sofa before the window, started up with a little exclamation.

'I was waiting for you, Henry. Aren't you tired?' He came over and sat down on the broad divan by her side. She was undressed and had thrown on a light wrapper; she looked very young and lovely, childlike and virginal—a child, not a wife.

'Aren't you tired, Henry? And now that the book has gone, can't you rest a little?'

He remembered that she had lifted his hands to her face gently, as though she put the roses of her cheeks between his palms, that he might gather them; and for the first conscious of the woman and of himself, the scales of labour fallen from his weary eyes, his wife had been like a marvellous spring of youth and delight to his lips. His arms full of her had been, as it were, full of flowers, and like a youth in a dream he had made his marriage night. He realised how potent her power must be, for after all the months that followed, after the year in which the sight of her dimmed and faded, as once again in harness he forgot her and life, the memory of the night could return as it did now and sway him like a tree in the storm.

He picked up her wrapper from the bed. Its soft texture met the face he buried in it. A fragrance came from it, like a key lost for years and suddenly found to open a treasure-box whose wonders dazzled the eyes.

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Dagget drew a long breath and ran his fingers through his heavy hair. Going quickly into his own room, he took his hat and stick and went down to Naples.

IIIX

LETTY DAGGET'S RED BOOK

WESTMINSTER, July 1, 1905.

Henry has been gone two months. I have just had one letter from him. But I do not complain of my husband even to myself. That letter told me of his journey and of his interests as if I were a man, and at the end he had first written 'I am, dear sir,' and then it was scratched out, and instead, 'Your affectionate husband.'

My child is a great resource. He is beautiful and gay and sweet. I have his little arms to surround me and his little cheek against mine, but I am, nevertheless, more lonely than if I had never been married, for the only thing I want is a thing it is my right to have, and I am deprived in my own domain.

Jack comes to see me every day. At first he was more discreet, but my loneliness has drawn him, and I let him come.

WESTMINSTER, August 2, 1905.

It is criticised here—Jack's coming so often. I went out to the Browning Club to-day, and there was a distinct coldness among the ladies. I am so unhappy that their attitude could not make me more so, and nothing but Henry's forgetfulness and his absence exists for me. Professor Watson lives

opposite us, and his wife sits in her front window all day. She has grown dry and withered and senseless after her long years of companionship with specimens. Her husband is the professor of biology, a great friend of Henry's, and during the period that the professor has been seeking the Secret of Life, the wife has died! So I shall do, I suppose, eventually! But it will be a hard struggle first to live—to make Henry see.

At the Literary Class Mrs. Watson said quite frankly: 'I would have come to see you, but you appear never to be alone.' I wouldn't give her the satisfaction of thinking that she troubled me. 'But you know Mr. Faverhill, don't you? My husband left me in his care.' Mrs. Watson smiled and said that he seemed to be very faithful to his trust! I have asked all the old cats for tea next week.

Jack comes in the afternoon and stops on for tea. He reads to me, and I sew, or we play together and sing. I have written a little series of lullables for my baby, and there is one the baby especially likes:

Pussy-cat's got on his snow-white shoes.

Pit-pat, pit-pat, soft and slow.

Brown eyes, blue eyes, which shall I choose?

One, two, three, four—round we go!

A child's laugh is the sweetest thing on earth, and my little boy's voice is like music. He dances in the middle of the floor to the song, and at 'one, two, three, four,' whirls about like a tiny dervish. How little Henry knows what he misses! In me? Well, that is not for me to say; but in the joy of father-hood and in his little growing child.

Jack Faverhill said: 'There are times when I love

the child and hate him—the last because he is Dagget's, the first because he is yours.'

WESTMINSTER, August 5, 1905.

Although Henry married me so young, many men loved me before he came, and Jack Faverhill loves me more than any one has ever loved me yet. Every act shows his feelings, and yet his loyalty has until now kept him silent. I have known it all winter, and it's all Henry's fault. His confidence in us both could come from nothing but indifference; he doesn't care, and I am trying myself. I have written Henry several times, of course, and I tell him of all Jack's visits—of his kindness. I am lonely-inexpressibly lonely. If Henry isn't man enough to know how dangerous solitude is for an unhappy woman, he isn't lover enough to care . . . he will have to learn to be, or I cannot bear the life he asks me to lead another month, another weekscarcely another day.

WESTMINSTER, August 10, 1905.

Jack has taken to coming entirely in the evenings. He rides over in the afternoons and stops to say how-do-you-do, or fetches me some books or flowers. But every night after dinner he comes early and stays until I send him home.

He sees how absorbed I am in my husband, and this, I now believe, is the sole reason that keeps him silent. His loyalty could not, for he seems to dislike Henry, and never speaks of him in any way. We talk of all manner of things, and I try not to let silences fall, because I am afraid of them now.

WESTMINSTER, August 13, 1905.

If Jack tells me that he loves me, I can, of course, never see him again any more. He knows this, too, but he surrounds me with his devotion, and if he could prevent it I would never be desolate again.

WESTMINSTER, August 14, 1905.

So far my conscience has not troubled me. I have been, so I have argued, taking no man's goods in having so much of Jack Faverhill's care and society. But to-day I have heard that his wife is very ill, I told him that he was neglecting his wife.

'Other men don't scruple to neglect theirs,' he replied, 'and, at least, my wife is unconscious of my delinquencies.'

I shall not see him to-night when he comes.

WESTMINSTER, August 15, 1905.

The Browning Club was to have met here to-day, and only two members came, the oldest ladies in the class. It was an insult as far as the others are concerned. I have created a scandal in the town where Henry is so honoured and adored, and, strange to say, it does not make me feel wicked at all. I have done nothing wrong—nothing at all.

WESTMINSTER, August 18, 1905.

I have not seen Jack for several days. His wife has been much worse. He has written me daily letters, and they are heart-breaking. It is not the woman who is going out of life that he is regretting—but one who in life can never be anything to him. With the letters he sends me flowers and books—

always some little thought that cannot fail to touch me in my deserted life.

WESTMINSTER, August 19, 1905.

To-day I sat in Henry's study, just before dinner. It is lined with books, of course—all dull, dreary, lifeless essays and pamphlets. Scientific works of all kinds, as I believe, a very valuable collection. He has willed it to the university. His table is covered with papers and text-books. Except for careful dusting by me with fear and trembling, these papers are never disturbed. As I looked about amongst the books, I saw on a lower shelf near his table a line of volumes which greatly surprised me: the English poets, agreeably bound; and as I took out one and turned it over, it bore the marks of having been read and much opened, and indeed the very page I opened to was marked.

Henry read the poets? Oh, it isn't possible! What have they said to him that I may not hear—that should not sing to me of my husband's love?

There is a photograph on his table, a class group. He was a graduate then; Henry was the handsomest of all the class. He must have been splendid to look at then. He is now. In this picture his face, young and fresh, is far more that of a poet than of a man of science, dreamy and charming. The baby will be like that, and, since he has my nature, he will keep his dreams.

WESTMINSTER, August 20, 1905.

Sitting there at Henry's table, I dared to write him a letter—a love-letter. The sonnet made me do

it. He must know it, since he marked it, and will re member it.

Why art thou silent? Is thy love a plant Of such frail fibre that the treacherous air Of absence withers. . . .?

Then I told him things I have never dared to say. I did it as a sort of armour against anything that might try to smite me in my loneliness, as a protection of Henry and of myself.

When I finished I felt that I could not see Jack Faverhill for a long, long time, as if I must shut my doors and keep myself in from all the world, and wait for my husband to come as he would, cold and uncaring as ever—still, to come. So I wrote Jack Faverhill too:

It is not fair to let you come and not to tell you all I should. You must know how I love, how I can love. You have seen it all winter, although you would not see or acknowledge it. You must do so now. This absence has given me courage to tell you this. All the love of my heart is given to another man. I do not call his name, for you will hate it so. But let this knowledge help you to forget and to understand. All during these long months it has been he and not you who was my constant companion; and my life shall be spent in trying to make him love me, as I do him. Forgive this cruel, cruel letter. I know all I owe you. I should have spared you. I have been selfish and cruel—can you forgive me? Can you? I can't have any right to your pardon, and yet that would be dear to me—it is all I can have a right to ask.

LETTY.

After I had written the letters, I hesitated some time about sending them. Henry may be home any

time now. Finally, I put them in their envelopes and addressed Henry's and left it on his table for him to find and read alone. And just as I was about to send Jack's to him, the maid came in and told me Mr. Faverhill was downstairs. At his name, and the idea that he had come again so faithfully, so kindly, I could not send the letter. I tore it in a thousand pieces, and threw them into the waste basket. It would be easier to tell him than on cold paper hurt him so.

XIV

NOT IN LETTY DAGGET'S RED BOOK

When Mrs. Dagget left her husband's library it was eleven o'clock. She had not marked the time, as at the table, absorbed in her writing of the letters of such different character, the gentle-hearted woman had given rein to her emotion, her loyalty, and her tears. For Letty had wept. Unused to transcribe in her intimate red book much of her own self, the tender little creature would never commit the confessions of her weakness to her diary. She had nevertheless cried, and bitterly, and her tears left her flushed and very lovely.

As on the warm summer night, in her dress of thin muslin, she came into the parlour where Faverhill stood waiting, she exhaled the sweetness of a tea-rose. On the piano there was a jar full of them; Faverhill had rifled his gardens for her, and he thought as she entered that she personified the flowers. Faverhill, who rarely permitted himself to look long on Letty, now opened his eyes wide that he might be satisfied with her, and looked his fill.

'Jack,' she said, 'isn't it late? Why do you come here so late? It's a mistake—I know it is. Is Mrs. Faverhill worse?'

He held firmly the greeting hand she gave.

'I've come to you like a creature possessed, Letty. These days have been full of horrors horrors—shut up there with illness—and such a dreadful kind of illness, shut in for days and days, and away from you.'

'Poor Jack!' she said softly.

'Poor indeed!' he accepted bitterly 'the poorest man in the world, Letty.'

Mrs. Dagget drew her hand away from his.

'It's very late.'

'Not very,' he hurried, 'and I couldn't help it. Let me stay a moment. In mercy, Letty! I'm stealing no man's riches. We're both alone—desperately alone—and I'm just short of hell. Sing me one little song—something awfully simple—one of the kiddie's lullabies, and I'll sit away over here on the sofa and listen to you—as I've listened to you, Letty, up there on the hill, for days and days and days.'

The windows were all open to the hot sultry night. Faverhill threw himself on the sofa, and Letty went over to the piano, opened it, and began to play. She sang him one after another of the simple, pretty little songs, written with a mother's understanding of restlessness, infinitely quiet and full of rest. Half lying on the sofa, Faverhill listened. The light from the candles fell on the tea roses, on Letty's hair. As she finished and rose, she became conscious of a feeling of faintness in the extreme heat. Making her way out from behind

the piano into the room, she wavered, grew dreadfully dizzy, and the room began to sway and the light to darken.

Jack Faverhill, who had left the sofa, came towards her. Letty tried to tell him she felt ill, tried to gain her equilibrium, whilst Faverhill, unconscious of her weakness, poured out his love for her in a torrent of words shaken from his soul. His vehemence, his passion, came upon her like a storm against a frail bark that has put too far out to sea. She tried to stop him—put out her trembling hands in vain, and then brought them both to cover her fainting heart.

Faverhill heard his name called in a supplicating cry, he saw her waver, sprang forward, and caught her in his arms.

As she came to herself she felt a great desire to weep and to be consoled, but at the sound of Faverhill's voice, at his touch, she started, roused herself vigorously, and, in spite of his entreaties, sat up and covered her face with her hands.

' Go.'

'Letty!'

'Go.'

His voice was pitiful. 'Have you no mercy—no mercy, Letty? Didn't you hear what I said?'

'I love my husband.'

Faverhill ground his teeth.

'He is as indifferent to you as the stones—more so—they would warm to you. He leaves you without any word or any regard.'

'Hush, hush, I don't need you to tell me that. I love him in spite of the fact that he does not love me.'

She leaned her head back on the sofa, still frightfully weak and trembling. The words she wanted to hear from Faverhill failed to come. She had a great fear that he would take her in his arms and that the human tenderness and strength would overcome her.

'You see how ill I am. Will you go?'

Faverhill knelt down beside her and tried to take her hands.

'I can't go, dearest—see how late it is. First of all, I can't leave you ill, and then I can't go out from here into the street at this hour.'

Mrs. Dagget stirred, and the colour came back to her cheeks. With all the force of which she was capable, she rose as in a dream.

'I don't care anything about the hour, or for the tongues of the people, if any one should see you. Henry will believe me, and not them. Even if you were seen, which is not likely, my husband will understand it.'

She went towards the door.

'If you don't go, Jack, I will. I will go over to Mrs. Watson and ask her to take me in.'

Out of reach of his hungry hands, she put her own behind her back.

Faverhill bit his pale lips.

'Then there is no hope for me, Letty?'

'Hope for you?' Her mouth curled. 'I adore my husband—don't you know it—know it—know it?'

Faverhill had opened the windows wide in order to give Letty all the air there was. Pale and beautiful, beyond him and lost to him, she tempted beyond his power to control, and with a maddened cry he caught her in his arms and crushed her to

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him, covered her with kisses, and then, almost letting her fall from him, rushed out of the house.

As he did so the shutters of the opposite windows were drawn closely to, and Mrs. Watson, who from the time Faverhill had entered three hours before had not left her post, now saw him rush out into the night.

XV

Dagget, who with utter fidelity had relinquished himself for twenty years to one mental occupation, now gave himself to his new state of mind with as complete abandon. He possessed a power of absorption in his subject to the extent that whilst he meditated and mused, analysed and resolved, the world was dead to him. And now, as he started down into Naples, he had not omitted to put on his hat, but he narrowly escaped being cut in two by a tram-car, and passed the illustrious Signore di Braccia without recognition. He walked on air in a new country where there were no tram-cars, no files of rattling cabs or staring pedestrians; where, indeed, there were no obstacles to reverie of a certain kind, and where, it is safe to say, there are no scientific gentlemen with cognomens of crustacea and mollusks in their minds.

The country was so new to Dagget that, explorer as he was, he revelled in its discovery. The border crossed, he longed to traverse its enchantment, to press forward to its limits, and as he wilfully gave himself up he was invaded and possessed by the triumphant emotion that, repressed and denied expression for so long, rushed over him and claimed him.

But the first bright brilliancy of the invasion

passed, and the retreat left the man in as melancholy a state as a field in shadow from which the dazzling lines of the review have melted away. The tragedy of the thing, its bare facts, were there, and they were to be reckoned with. It was all very charming and wonderful to find himself a man passionately in love; but with whom was he thus desperately entangled? His vision of his wife had come too late, the time was over when they too might present a pair whose happiness should tempt the gods. His love had come in a tragic time—it was too late! She had given herself to another man.

Dagget's strong face grew ashen as he forced the truth out before his eyes. The thing he had borne with extraordinary calmness now became a glowing coal that no part of his senses could touch without being seared to extreme anguish.

Was it only within the last few weeks that he had loved his wife? Yes; the emancipation from the scenes which had claimed him for fourteen years, his sudden freedom from excessive and regular labour, had given him leisure at length to see the woman he had asked to share his life. Not until his work, his lifeless, soulless book, had been completed, had he found time to take her to his arms; and even after he had so held her—as a mirage grows to the sight for a brief moment above the gray of the horizon—she had faded and cold reality had closed upon his sight again.

Meanwhile Letty had bloomed, grown more lovely, and whilst he had proved himself to be beyond the pale of human desire, indifferent and sexless as the science with which he was absorbed could make him, Faverhill had profited by the husband's neglect.

'Pardon her.' How arch-ridiculous the words seemed! What, after all, did she care for his pardon? Why, indeed, had she come away with him? Jack Faverhill's wife was doomed—she would soon die and Letty could be the wife of the man she loved. It was Dagget's duty to set her free. If there were another woman in the world towards whom he felt as he did to Letty, he'd break iron bars to reach her! Faverhill would no doubt do the same-only Faverhill wasn't capable of such love as his. common egotism, this lover, new to all passion, set himself above the run of mankind. What did the ethics of the case demand? That he should give her freedom? Give her her child? She had done no wrong, she had only turned from starvation to daily bread. Love was that daily bread—he knew it now, and knew too that he would starve without it. Dagget was no longer conscious of precise codes-Letty was what he wanted. Letty! And so long as Mrs. Faverhill lived—why, he would keep his wife, and with soul and life try to win her to him. Letty-Letty-the word had music to him. He said it over with a thrill every time its pretty form crossed his moving lips.

He had reached the Viadi Chiaia, with its crowd of shoppers and indolent foot-passengers, filthy beggars, crush of cabs and private equipages. Mechanically he had come thus far without the intention of following his wife, and suddenly remembered that this was where she had mentioned her rendezvous as taking place! His sight was good—he had on his most powerful glasses. Coming out of a glove shop on the opposite side of the street, he saw her familiar figure in a white dress and a large hat covered with

roses; she crossed the Via Chiaia. Two flower venders offered Letty roses which flamed like crimson suns in the baskets in the women's hands. Letty smilingly refused to buy, and, passing within twenty feet of her husband, went into a pasticceria, the fashionable meeting-place for shoppers in the town.

Drawn irresistibly after her, Dagget slowly walked in the same direction, and in front of the confectioner's came face to face with the man who had ruined his married life.

The shock was so sudden, the cold, terrible truth of it was so staggering, that Dagget, without moving a muscle of his face, made Faverhill no sign of recognition; he stood immovable on the sidewalk, stricken as it were to stone.

Dagget left the Via Chiaia to go whither he did not know, and the women and girls with baskets of roses and heliotrope, the crowd of beggars and the insolent leisured class, surged in behind him like a sea in a narrow channel on whose surface his wild turbulence had left no trace. He was torn between an insane desire to rush into the café and brutally seize the man whose bold following of his wife had led her again from him, and a desire to get as far as possible away from the present scene—from the street where Letty was holding her clandestine meeting with her lover. If Faverhill had come out then before him, he would have struck him in the face. He could have killed him and taken the woman savagely in his arms.

With these complications in his breast, the sorely tried man aimlessly directed his way towards the lower part of Naples, towards the sea. This time he was forcibly accosted by a hand on his own, and his abstraction broken as the genial face of his Italian friend Signore di Braccia met his.

'Per dio, professore, you are ill!'

The gentleman had been to the hotel for Professor Dagget—he even fancied he had passed him some minutes earlier in the street? Some wonderful specimens of cephalopodi had been discovered in the direction of Capri, and a little party were at this moment to start out under di Braccia's direction in a launch to prospect. Wouldn't it interest Dagget to go with them?

Dagget did not hesitate. To wander the streets in his present state of mind was to court lunacy. To return to his hotel was impossible—the thought of it sickened him. This was a solution; he could think better or think less and grow calm if at only a few miles' distance from the city.

As, some fifteen minutes later, he stepped into the launch that rocked gently on the green waves of the bay, there were tears in his eyes; behind the high polish of his glasses that blurred with the mist, he saw the shore with its multi-coloured houses and the old fort, and without hearing listened to the rhapsodies of Signore Vittorio di Braccia over deep-sea treasures. During the little voyage Professor Dagget was called upon to deliver up all his knowledge of piscatology, and the Italian found the savant profoundly ignorant, and that he himself knew far more than did the American of the fish in the waters of Bermuda and Florida.

'One peculiarity of the fish in the Mexican Gulf, Signore Daggeti . . .'

He had promised to pardon her! Yes, but not to extend his grace and his protection to a life of open.

continued revolt. He would never see her again. With an intensity all the more powerful because new and unworn in the battle of life, he swung in the tempest of feeling like a mechanism rudely shaken, its balance dashing from side to side. When he got back to Naples, he would not return to his hotel, but would write her from another and leave her free. He smiled bitterly to think how entirely he was, with all it cost him, doing only what she of course most devoutly wished. His accusations, as he held them against the mental whetstone, sharpened themselves. Letty! Who could have dreamed it of her—the gentle, docile creature whose attitude of mute affection had flattered his masculine vanity whenever he had sufficiently come out of the world of meditation to remark her. Dagget felt as if he had been preserving and tending in the dark a specimen which he held to be of a certain variety, and on opening the shutters to the light, behold! the plant was another thing!

The prow of the naphtha launch cut clear into the waters whose transparent surface was blue as pale glass. It seemed to ride through a dilution of azure.

'Ecco,' smiled the affable Italian, who had finished his particular exposition of the evolution and transition of a certain orustacea. His exclamation waited in the air for the professor's appreciation to follow.

'Ex-actly,' Dagget ventured to say.

'Then you do think such a transformation possible, Signore?'

The poor fellow smiled vaguely. By his friend's expression, he saw how unhappy his abstraction had proved.



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He would be obliged to return to Westminster, close up his affairs there, take his son to another city, and begin a new life. His plan had none of the simplicity of the past; the idea was dreadful to him. To admit failure after he had so ably undertaken to pilot the vessel safe to port! But it was not those chagrining phases that held his mind. Letty's lightness, her folly, her wrong, had ruined his career? He would at his age have to begin anew? This debacle was not the overpowering cause of his unrest.

Di Braccia had signalled for the launch to stop, and it puffed gently to a final silence. They were surrounded by little gaudy fisher boats that looked like strange birds on the breast of the bay. The men were casting out nets. Di Braccia unrolled a queer little net of his own, and gave one to the American gentleman, who dutifully untangled his and let it down into the still, beautiful water.

The Italian's eyes were all animation, and in a husky whisper he explained the importance of the occurrence again.

'This specimen is indigenous here, but has never been taken. If we are fortunate, we will be the pioneers of the discovery.'

It was almost sunset. From Naples to the further shore the sky was pale golden, the hue of a daffodil, and across it floated bits of cloud of darker gold, whose colours were reflected on the tranquil bay. Vesuvius, greatly agitated of late, was enveloped in smoke whose columns lay around the apex like great triumphant storms of snow, through which filtered the lava stream.

Nothing of the excitement of his colleague and the eager attention of the peasant fishermen who bent over their boat's side communicated itself to Dagget; nothing in the realm of science could hold him at this hour. The discovery of the rubric of the vestal virgins under the golden dust of the Forum, the unrolling of a Ptolemy from his cerement in the Tombs of the Kings, would have had no interest to his tortured and yet ecstatic mind. It was the result of his long life of restraint, of his denial of deafness and blindness to the great emotions, to the vital principles which make the universe.

The beauty of the falling night, the rich, sensuous colour of the Italian scene, the purple island anchored like a ship of dreams in the glassy bay, the velvet blur of the shores, the spectacle of utter loveliness, were only an aggravation of his mood—it was not a mood; it ceased to be a reverie, a meditation, it was a war of passions. He had been indifferent to the woman he had married; he loved her now terribly—yes, that was the word; it was terrible to be like this. His feelings had none of the spirit of sacrifice, he had no wish to give her up to her happiness, and go out of the field himself. His point of view had none of the grace of pardon. was a jealous anger at her wronging of him—an impotent misery at his loss of her. He did not want to give her up to Faverhill-he wanted her here—here, in the little, motionless boat, in the golden light, alone with him. He wanted to be alone with her at last. As his longing and desire overmastered for a moment his jealousy—as, unsatisfied, he still more than anything else longed for her-mixed with the tempest of selfish and natural passion came a tenderness for her, a gratitude sharp and delicious and cruelly sweet for the little he had had of her.

For her motherhood—he thought of her child—his child. In a moment he became at once father, husband, lover—too late! Out of the wreck his child was left only to torture him with his likeness to her; but the wife, the woman, was lost to him. Letty, Letty—Letty!

He started with a nervous horror that he might cry out his grief to the stupid, dense creatures who surrounded him. His throat, his eyes, his heart, were full of tears.

'Altro!' whispered the Italian. 'Now, professore! Vede-vede-

He leaned wildly over the edge. 'Lift up your net. 'Ah, gently—per dio—gently! You see? You feel? Madonna!'

Warily and delicately the two men dragged the light net through the water, drawing and fastening its edges together, and with a quick, sudden gesture it was seized by one of the boatmen to whom it was relinquished. The net was handed to the signore. A few jellyfish had floated in—pale and quivering, of no special consequence to the scientist. A mass of crimson brilliance lay at the bottom of the net of Professor Dagget.

'Fortunato — fortunato!' screamed the Italian. 'Complimenti—milli, complimenti, illustrissimi. You have taken the prize. For the Americans all is success!'

XVI

An accident to the little launch delayed the fishing party, and Dagget did not reach his hotel until after nine o'clock.

Mrs. Dagget, so he learned, was not in the

restaurant, but in her room. There, without planning a campaign, and only yielding to his desire to see his wife again, he followed her.

She was at her table, writing; and hurriedly, as her husband came in, Letty drew a sheet of paper over her letter.

Thinking of her as he had been for hours, possessed mentally by the shifting images of her which his remembrances had furnished him, and thinking of her as lost to him, it was with more or less of a shock that he at length saw her alone; very pale and very agitated, with marks of weeping on her eves and cheeks, the fact of her absorption in something which had no connection with him served, as could nothing else, to give Dagget control.

'It's very late, isn't it? Have you dined, Letty? It's just nine o'clock.'

She did not ask her husband any questions about his day, or where he had been.

'Dined?' she wondered. 'Oh, I think so; I must have had something to eat somewhere. I don't feel hungry, any way, Henry.'

One of the characteristics of the new love in Dagget's heart was chivalry: her trouble and agitation touched him; there was something pathetic in her expression, and she seemed wonderfully young. Whatever intention he entertained of accusing or demanding an explanation altered at her appearance.

'You look very tired, Letty. Aren't you well? What can I do for you? Will you tell me?'

Her lip trembled, she bit it—would she confess to him? Speak at last of her own free will?

But Letty threw her head back with a nervous little laugh and, looking up at the clock, said:

'Oh, I'm not tired, Henry! I was only writing, as you came in, something that I must finish.'

And it came to him then with a sudden inspiration that he might give her a chance to prove herself true to him.

'Letty,' he said awkwardly, standing there before the table, his hand heavy on it, his face reddening, 'you said something, if you will remember, the other day about liking to see Umbria. You are quite right. It would be a delightful excursion. There is a good motor here for rent. I should like to go very much myself.'

'But,' she faltered, 'your notes, and the fish and things, Henry!'

'They're not important'—he discovered it then; 'they can go.'

There was certainly no evidence of delight on her face at this promise of an extended honeymoon.

'Oh, yes,' she evaded; 'I did think it would be nice, Henry—some time.'

'It's the season.' He advanced with eagerness. 'I'm in the mood for a change. I'll go up and speak to them in the office, and give up our rooms. We'll get off to-morrow.'

'To-morrow!'

There was every pretext in her voice, every reluctance; he ached at her tone.

'Yes,' he nodded and smiled. 'You can pack in the morning, can't you, and we'll set off about four——'

'Oh, no, Henry, I couldn't-not to-morrow.'

'Why, Letty?'

'It is too soon—I've got clothes being made, and all sorts of things—but the following——'

The pain and trouble in her face, the perplexity, struck him with a sharpness that amounted to physical pain. He controlled himself with gigantic effort.

'Then you do not really care to go?' He waited.

'No,' she slowly admitted. 'No, I don't believe I do just now, Henry. I love—Naples. I'm not half through with it yet.'

She endeavoured, it was plain, to take it off lightly, and to smile now, but Dagget's face was hard as wood. Beside himself with suspicion, certain of her falseness, he pressed his point stupidly.

'But suppose I were to ask you as a favour to me, Letty, to come—to come to-morrow?'

'I should think it was as unusual as your demand, and say that I should remain at home.'

He saw again the hostility, the dread of him, that deepened hourly.

'Still, I do ask you, Letty.'

Both pain and disappointment were clearly written on her face.

'I can't come, Henry—I can't. Don't ask it.'

'You want more than anything, then, to be alone?'

She nodded.

He turned without further words and went back to his room. It didn't now occur to him to dine. He went blindly over to the window and stood there in the darkness, his hands in his pockets, his eyes on the night, where below in the valley Naples was aglow with her firefly lights, and where across the bay, whose waters were reddened by the reflection, the plumes and feathers of Vesuvius shook in crimson flame, and down through the mountain's black sides

cut the ruddy scars of the old wounds and the new.

So, he mused, he would bear across his heart the wound of the last months till death. He would be forced to set his wife free, but he must love her to the end.

The fact of Faverhill's appearance meant, of course, that Mrs. Faverhill had died—it could mean nothing else—and Dagget would ethically have no right to keep Letty and her lover from happiness.

'Ethically!'—he said the word between his teeth. Where was there any ethical solution for his hopeless misery? What philosophy or code of reason could teach him to master this late passion which, like spring floods set free at last, broke the bonds of ice and restraint, and came jubilant, if devastating, through his whole nature?

Now that he allowed his thoughts to devour him, there returned with all the distinctness they should first have possessed, and with the feelings that should first have awakened, the circumstances of his coming home from Labrador. The cold, stern neutrality of the work he had left was still with him. He had been keenly absorbed by his experiences. His companions, two Englishmen and a German, had found Dagget of Westminster the light and spirit of the party. His work had been brilliant, and whatever had been added to the knowledge of the times in this exploration was due to Dagget. They had given him the credit, and he was full of his experience and of satisfaction with his voyage.

Parting with his friends on the warm September night, he had taken his train, and, his mind still far away in the country he had left, reached his own door before realising that he was back in the familiar ways of the university town and had come home.

Could it be possible that without the least emotion he had seen his wife after three months? Could it be possible? After three months' famine he had not taken her in his arms? He had greeted her affectionately when he found her waiting on the porch for him. He remembered no other tenderness. Why, he had not been a human being until now. His asceticism grew hideous to him. He was suffering as he had never supposed he could suffer, but he also lived—and his memories, finding him responsive to sentiment, made good their moment and thronged around him.

The following day was disagreeably clear in his mind. Professor Watson had come to see him in his library at the college. Watson had reserved out of his day an hour for his interview with his colleague, and the visit consumed just five minutes! Dagget at that time was not a lover, and little of a husband, but his other qualities were strongly marked. Short as Professor Watson's conversation was, it had proved complete, for although cut across abruptly, brutally, by Dagget's anger and scathing retort, the illumining was perfect. Watson had not spent his life in being exact, accurate, and brief for nothing! The pith of his information in a small circumference gave itself to Dagget, who was more brilliantly enlightened by one flash in the dark than he would have been in the accustomed light of day. When Watson left, Dagget finished his work with more or less calm, put up his papers, and quietly went home at his appointed hour.

Standing here in Naples, his eyes fixed on the

gaping sides of the volcano, how clearly now the Henry Dagget of Westminster came before him, and the Dagget of Italy couldn't understand him at all! He remembered that he had once gone to his library, as if its familiar walls and its accustomed quiet were the atmosphere in which he best could envisage the question at hand. He had been unable to speak to his wife that night, or the next day. He had a vague idea that his sister, who had returned from Europe, was at the house the most of the time and the women were together. He asked Letty to come to his study the fourth day after dinner, as one would summon a culprit to judgment. Paler than ever, timid, and vet so lovely that even then he had observed her undoubted beauty as though it had needed another man's love to make Dagget see his wife, trembling and appealing, Letty came.

Dagget had spared her nothing. He told her all. She had heard, with no denial, with no response, with only that frightened look which he took for guilt and for terror. At the end of the damning story he had waited, hoping for a direct refutation, expecting one.

None came.

To spare her all the humiliation possible, he had kept his eyes from her—he could feel again the paper-cutter which in his hand he had bent back and forth. After an unconscionable time, he had been obliged himself to break the silence.

'I want to tell Watson that his wife lies—to repeat it to him. I wish with your sanction to repeat to Watson my entire refutation of his scandal.'

At this he had looked up at her, and had seen her

lighten as if she had been grateful. But when Letty's answer fell at length, he had understood that it must have taken her a long time to frame it.

'All that Mrs. Watson says is true.'

And then, as she spoke, he had realised with horror that he was not surprised! He had believed it! The words Watson said bore the stamp of truth on them. He stiffened with disgust as she spoke. He thought of his child, of his lifelong friend, and a judgment stern and relentless fell on him and on the woman. He had at his wife's words risen, as if her confession put an end to any intimate conversation between them. He had been conscious that she now looked at him eagerly. He wanted time to be alone to think. He had asked for it.

'I must have time to look at this, to face it, to think for us both. You are young, and I have been very much to blame.' And even then he had felt the responsibility of her, and that he must save her if he could; give her at least the chance to be saved. 'I have Watson's word of honour,' he said stiffly, 'that this shall go no further—no further; and I can rely on this assurance.'

He now remembered her pale silence and her loveliness must have forced him the question, 'You then love Faverhill?' and as in leaving the room she passed his table she had said:

'There's a letter there, Henry. Read it, will you? It will speak for me. I wrote it for you to read.'

After the door had closed Dagget found among his papers the letter addressed to him:—

It is not fair to let you come and not to tell you all I should. You must know how I love, how I can love. You have seen it all winter, although you would not see or

acknowledge it. You must do so now. This absence has given me courage to tell you this. All the love of my heart is given to another man. I do not call his name, for you will hate it so. But let this knowledge help you to forget and to understand. All during these long months it has been he and not you who was my constant companion; and my life shall be spent in trying to make him love me, as I do him. Forgive this cruel, cruel letter. I know all I owe you. I should have spared you. I have been selfish and cruel—can you forgive me? Can you? I can't have any right to your pardon, and yet that would be dear to me—it is all I can have a right to ask.

LETTY.

By a strange caprice of fate, the love letter to her husband had been the one destroyed, and Letty had left her letter to Faverhill in its place!

When at midnight he passed her room on his way to his own, he had heard the sound of her sobbing in the darkness, and his heart towards her was hard as steel. Letty's letter, with what he had understood to be her confession of love for Faverhill, he had burned and he had never let himself think of it. In the days which he had taken to decide their future. he had argued that she was very young, very impressionable, that he had neglected her, that she was a mother as well as a wife, and that her fancy for Faverhill might die a natural death in change of scene and under his watchful care. subtlety had caused his decision to embrace the leaving of the child at home he would have been at a loss to tell himself. He regretted it now. He had done a foolish thing; no ties, no responsibilities, were too many to have been employed. He now felt he had made a grave mistake. No doubt she

had thought him an inquisitor, more heartless than ever before.

Now, as he mused here in Naples, his decision, taken after two months' mature deliberation, appeared absurd. Divorce should have been the solution, and Faverhill's appearance forced upon him the ultimatum he should have taken in Westminster. He must set Letty free—he drew himself up—unless in the letter she was writing she was herself grasping her freedom—was taking leave of him to join Faverhill.

This occurred to him with such violent force, that, unable to endure the thought of the sudden loss of her, he hastened to her room. It was empty. He crossed it, and opened the door, to see Letty just disappearing around the first bend of the hall. Through the corridor of the deserted hotel her husband followed her to the elevator, and when the lift reached the ground floor Dagget was descending the last staircase. Letty did not leave the hotel, but quickly went along the long hallway, as if her haste were a fever, and at the last door she stopped, listened, did not even knock, but turned the knob and went in.

It was past midnight—past midnight.

Jealousy and passion had kept the husband close to the door. This then, of course, was where she had come weeks ago, where she had doubtless come night after night, and his delicacy had forborne to spy upon her! *Delicacy!* His overwhelming feelings scorned it now as well as any fear of a scandal or bruit, and yet for a second Dagget paused. What should he do, once in that room before the woman and her lover? What a dreadful, unwelcome third

he would prove! What would his anger lead him to do?

As he stood he heard his wife's voice within. There was no reply. Its tone was hushed, a whisper, low and caressing. The words he could not distinguish, but their message was the soul of tenderness. Then Letty began softly to sing—the melody was familiar to him, he had heard it before:

Pussy-cat's got on his snow-white shoes—
Pit-pat, soft and slow.

Brown eyes, blue eyes, which shall I choose?
One, two, three, four—round we go!

Noiseless as a thief Dagget opened the door—so noiselessly that the woman singing did not hear him.

The light from the candle carefully screened on the night stand was so dim that the figures in the room took form slowly. Dagget had seen pictures of phantom loveliness—Letty and her child were like them. She had taken the baby from his crib, and, sitting on the larger bed with him in her arms, she rocked and sang with him.

Her husband had half-way crossed the floor—said her name reassuringly—before she saw him and gave a little cry. The baby, suddenly startled, sat up in his mother's arms.

'Hush, hush, Henry, he doesn't know you; you'll frighten him—he's been feverish all day. There, darling, don't be frightened; it's father.'

But Dagget had come close to them, and softly knelt down at the woman's knees, at the feet of the child who, half uncovered in the warm night, lay like a rose on her lap. Perhaps the little thing who had seen the doctor all day—who had seen Jack Faverhill and bidden him good-bye-was prepared for the advent of many masculine friends. At all events, he showed no signs of fear; again, possibly, the feelings in his father's heart, the expression of his face, through some subtle medium, touched the child's spirit, for he put out a friendly little hand and said the word he had been taught, had rehearsed so many times, for which he had had so little use.

'He's a great deal better to-night, but while I was out this afternoon they sent for two doctors.'

Looking down at her husband, Letty said with a reproach as keen as it was gentle:

'Henry, you didn't really think I could leave my baby, did you? Why, he came on the same ship with us—he's been here all along, and you never knew! All the time I haven't spent with you I've been with him, and I've been so anxious lately because the hot weather is bad for him, and his nurse doesn't speak the language.'

The mother's voice, modulated for sleepy ears, was soothing, and the child's eyes closed. Letty's care for him was pretty to watch. She drew his night clothes around his feet, she folded him as one might the leaves of a rose close in a loving hand; when she was sure that his sleep was sound, she lifted him to put him back in his crib. Then she came out in the room to her husband.

The Madonna, as it were, before whom Dagget for a moment had knelt, added to the love he felt to be hopeless a new adoration. Bending his eyes on her eagerly, almost appealingly, he said:

'I followed you in spite of myself. I couldn't reason—God knows—I didn't expect to see you like this! How could I dream it? I expected to find Faverhill with you, and I don't know what I should have done, Letty. There is only one thing at all in my mind that is clear to me—how I love you. I know that Faverhill is here. By chance to-day I saw him go to meet you. I suppose by his being here in Naples that his wife is dead and he is free. If he loves you—as I do—I pity him. If you love him as I love you, I pity you. But you love each other, and therefore I envy you both with all my soul. I leave you free, Letty—I shall leave you free, of course. I don't know what will become of me, but I want you to know—to hear first how I love you.'

If Letty had thought her husband's voice beautiful when he read to her the story of Umbria, she must have thought it more beautiful now. Its low-whispered emotion sent the blood flying to her delicate cheeks. She had come nearer to him. They stood in the far end of the room, near the shaded light. Shadows of the man's and the woman's figures danced on the walls.

'Why must you give me up to him, Henry?'

'Because you love him.'

'What makes you think so?'

Dagget stared.

'Not those vile stories the husband of that woman told you? Surely that could not have made you doubt me as you have?'

'You did not deny them, Letty.'

'Deny them!' Her voice was deep with scorn. 'To you who should have rather died than have thought them true! What Mrs. Watson said was true. Jack came daily in my loneliness—he came

that night—I was ill, and he stayed until it was dreadfully late. He has loved me, he told me so. He is here because his wife is dead, and he is free—that is true, too—but why must you give me up to him, Henry?'

- 'Your letter, Letty---'
- 'My letter?'
- 'The letter you wrote me and asked me to read that night in my library.'

He saw her bewilderment.

'Oh! What did it say?'

Dagget told her.

As she explained to him Dagget listened, drinking in her pretty, quick, uncertain words that were profound evidence of the waste and pity of months of doubt and suspicion and despair, the waste of love, the cruel, sterile waste of love and confidence and life and understanding.

But for philosophy and moralising there was no place in his heart, nor for sadness than at the loss of life and the cheat of time—as he took his fill of looking at the little creature who with flushed cheeks and with eyes wonderfully deep and tender stood with lighted face and made the world clear for him and beautiful—and whose words created a new heaven and a new earth.

'Oh, Henry,' she breathed, 'how I have watched for the signs of love to come! With what pride and happiness I have seen here in Italy day by day that you were beginning to care a little what I did and where I was. The day you wanted me to stay with you, I nearly ran to your arms—but it wasn't time, it wasn't time! Is it time now, Henry? Oh, do you think you really care? You're so clever,

and I'm such a silly little thing — I know — I know.' She was weeping.

Dagget, who held one of her hands crushed in his as if it were a flower, would have drawn her to his arms, but she kept him away a little with gentle force.

'Why, when you said you would "pardon me," I could have died with grief that day. To think that you could believe of me what you did—could dream—could believe—didn't know and see. Jack Faverhill knew, he knew always, how I felt, and I have written him that I never want to see his face again. Oh, Henry,' she cried, 'how blind you were—how blind! Why, when you said that word "pardon" I knew how little you cared for me! Men who love can't pardon. It was the cruellest thing you ever said in your life.'

Dagget overcame her resistance; he put both arms about her.

'Letty, I never pardoned you—you must believe it. I knew it after I began to realise how I loved you—I could have killed you, I think, if I had found you false. But listen, dearest, listen; if there is any pardon you can show or give to me, my darling——'

'Oh, hush!' she whispered.

He silenced her murmured words with his caresses, and for a long time stood so holding her to him.

The child called faintly from its dreams and quieted again. The fitful candle-light, quivering at last to a final flame, lit with its little glory the figures of husband and wife and then flickered out into the dark.

THE MASTER OF CRAVEN: A ROMANCE

I

SINCE Tempest had shut himself up in Craven he had added to rather than diminished his popularity. He refused to be further lionised; either timid or wise, in the white heat of his fame's flame he ran away! Rather than watch his fame fall to ash, or fearful that its tense heat should harm him? For neither reason. He was not thinking of London, or his public—he was thinking of himself.

In Craven, whilst immured, he was as well delightfully at large. The castle itself was a prison, standing as it did a dozen miles from any railway, and dominating as it did the entire county of ——. Craven was a fortress for the writer's hours of labour—a pleasure-garden for his leisure. But on this occasion he had not come to it for the sympathetic atmosphere it extended to his work. Craven was not to offer in this sojourn any of its aforetime tonic—nor was it demanded that it should suggest a new theme or cradle an old idea. Mr. Tempest, a solitary inhabitant of his study, asked a new balm of his retreat: it must be a panacea.

'It should be,' he said aloud, as he replaced a book in the shelves and found another, 'a padded cell.'

Into the great bow window, whose squares of

glass let in the whole wide country sweep to his eyes—once a veritable lover's eyes for this English nature, whose graces and beauties Tempest had made to live and bloom in his book till all England echoed his muse—into the bow window his housekeeper daily cleverly drew the writing-table. Tempest many times before it had seen hour after hour slip away, until, exhausted yet supremely content, he had risen, aching in every limb, the pile of manuscript grown at his hand, his work done and he himself free and buoyant as only the creator can be before his self-appointed task. But writing materials remained these days untouched.

November had almost gone, and the drear bareness of the landscape, although not yet despoiled of leafage, was hidden this afternoon by a mist full of rain. Tempest had the extent of blank gloom before him as he faced it by the window, leaning against his work-table, his back to the room. Something of the leaden quality of the outside reflected itself on his face. But he had not time to follow his meditations to their end, for a timid rap on the door fell once repeated, then the door opened and his housekeeper came in.

'I beg pardon, Mr. Basil. . . .' He did not stir. She waited a moment, then advanced. 'I beg your pardon, sir.'

After another silence he blurted out: 'Well? What for, pray? If you have any good reason for breaking in on me, Henly, you will give it.'

She felt it was not a good reason, and trembled.

- 'I've disobeyed you, sir.'
- 'I'd rather forgive you than hear about it. Don't do it again.'

'I won't indeed, sir; but——'

Tempest turned reluctantly to the intruder. She said 'Oh,' involuntarily, as she caught sight of his face: the last hour had ravaged it. Her evident affection, not her sympathy, modified his mood.

'What the devil have you done?' he asked, not unkindly. 'It can't be worse than coming here to me after my express injunctions.'

'It is worse, sir,' she nodded. 'I've let in a lady.'
She breathed more freely, with the whole confession of her crime's enormity.

Tempest's surprise was as sharp as his displeasure.

'A lady?—you're dotty!'

She pleaded, 'I couldn't help it, Mr. Basil: she had walked from Cravenford to see you, sir,—and I hadn't the heart.'

'Come!' he exclaimed furiously, 'I am not to be obeyed, then, Henly? I see plainly you are taken advantage of—of——I mean to say you're astounding! I give orders to leave me in peace, to refuse my doors, to keep my mail, my dispatches away; and you admit God knows whom and for what purpose, at your pleasure.'

She let him fume, and her patient, gentle bearing of his detestable humour made him ashamed.

'What for, pray?'

'I don't know, sir,' she said humbly. 'I couldn't say no—somehow. She begged a moment; she had walked the twelve miles, and she says she must foot it back. . . . It's late too.'

'She has a note-book? Of course!'

'She's a pretty hat on and a long dark coat, and she is so lovely, Mr. Basil, that I——'

She finished subtly, and triumphed.

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Her master very slightly smiled. 'It's a farce,' he muttered, 'and ridiculous: you've gone so far that I can't drag your hospitality back—as if I had a string to it. Fetch her in.'

Tempest passed his nervous hand through his hair, gave a last look to the grey without, as though he confided his melancholy to it, promising to return again for it, without fail; and came out into the room.

When Mrs. Henly reappeared she opened the door, consigned her guest quickly to the study, and withdrew like lightning, lest she should be hailed to escort her out again!

The stranger deserted in this fashion looked about her rather startled. Tempest, in a black velvet jacket into whose pockets his hands were thrust, blocked up the foreground. He saw her embarassment, and that her lips were almost white. She bowed to him, still standing where Mrs. Henly's catapult-like ushering had placed her. 'I am Lucy Carew,' she announced in a voice that did not waver at all. 'I have come all the way from America to see you.'

Mr. Tempest started. The sudden addition of three thousand five hundred miles to the twelve was material. 'Trop aimable,' he said: 'I shall seem ungracious if I say that I receive no one, not even an emissary from the Cape of Good Hope.' He chose at random, and as he said it its meaning caught his sensitive ear. He smiled. 'You will let me be inconsequent and except that point? You see, to be frank, I have refused myself to every one, Miss Carew (he said her name as though it were a household word): every one—friend, enemy, kind and unkind. I am a recluse——'

'I know,' she accepted; 'I read in the *Daily Telegraph* that you were. I scarcely dared expect to see you; when I got out at Cravenford and found I should have to walk twelve miles I was nearly discouraged.'

'Nearly!' he echoed. 'It is a tramp, even for an English girl; your countrywomen are not supposed to be walkers.'

'I've not walked much before,' she admitted, 'and my heels are high; but when I got here it was the worst of all: your housekeeper refused me, and then'—she raised the slight veil she wore, her eyes were sparkling and disclosed no trace of it—'I cried,' she said frankly.

Tempest took his hands from his pockets and extended one with the charming gesture he knew so well won him friends. For a brief second his face relaxed, illuminated. He came up to his guest. 'Don't cry here,' he implored. 'I can't imagine what a three-thousand-five-hundred-and-twelve-mile fatigue may be, but if you can rest from some of it in this chair, will you do so? I will ring for tea and lights.'

Tempest understood the nature of human feeling too well not to know with a flash how great was the pleasure of his own, and not to realise that he had never experienced quite the like sensation before. Into his outstretched hand a hand slender and strong fell as naturally as though it had waited for just this shelter ever since it had been made. He led the girl to his favourite chair, and took delight in seeing her sink into it.

She had quickly undone her veil and taken it off, and he then saw the fatigue under her eyes, the

pallor of her face, and withal the freshness of it. It was a luminous face, if such a term might be used—he thought it might. Her figure was concealed by a long dark coat that rose to her neck, and she nestled into the comfort of the chair with an acquiescence of fatigue her expression did not admit. Indeed, her eyes, fastened on Tempest, were the loveliest things he had encountered for a long time.

The unconventionality of the visit, her calm behaviour in it, touched his humorous vein. He slightly rallied her as he spoke, in a tone not the less agreeable and perfectly gracious.

'What wager are you winning? Miss Carew, you have won it! How much of the twelve miles did you walk really?'

She held out a small foot in a badly damaged high-heeled shoe. 'A cart brought me to a cross-road, and then I walked on—twelve miles the man said it was, and it seemed it!'

Tempest had tasted the rare and delicious mead that fame during lifetime brews. Whether or not the fact that he was accorded to be the greatest living novelist and poet meant that his glory should go down to posterity, at all events he heard himself so called. All that is fulsome and wearying and sweet in popularity he had tasted and sickened of. He did not wish to ask this young woman why she had come to him; he dreaded lest she should say. The moment she should ask him for his autograph the singular and piquant charm of her apparition would vanish and he would become his brutal savage self again. This unusual visit would not bear vulgarity or even tangibility. Despite the

adjustment of his eyeglass, he saw her as if through a film; it added to the unrealness of her presence.

'You will have tea? Perhaps you will make it for me?'

The lights had been brought in with the drawing of the curtain over the rain-swept window.

Miss Carew's hands lay inert on the chair's arms. She shook her head. 'I am afraid I can't—I am so tired.'

Tempest rather clumsily made it, and gave her a cup, and a bit of toast. Then she stirred with effort and drank slowly. It stimulated her: she had been, to judge by the lines beneath her eyes, near to exhaustion.

During the few moments her host's face had clouded again. He forgot, evidently, his guest, and looked up with a start as she spoke.

'You have not asked me why I came, Mr. Tempest.'

'I don't wish to know.'

'Ah!' she smiled. 'If I don't tell you, it will be because you forbid me; and——'

'I do forbid,' he said shortly, 'if it's a tiresome reason. I won't say women's reasons are usually tiresome, for I am sure they never give the real ones. Nothing would be so delightful, I am willing to believe, as a woman's sincere motive or reason for what she does! It's a black rose, a "merle blanche." Miss Carew, I've never seen any of the three.'

She did not take this opportunity to remark on his psychology of feminine subtleness, but said equably: 'The result of such forbidding would be the blocking of my whole career.'

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He echoed the word with scorn. 'Career! Heavens, you have one? You don't look it, I am glad to say. I am sorry for you,' he finished brusquely.

She had unfastened the collar of her coat, and it fell back. Her dress underneath was as sober in tone. Tempest rose to move aside the tea-table that was between them.

'Let me help you off with that wrap. It's warm here, and you won't feel it when you go out.'

He wanted to see her out of the chrysalis of her uncompromising garment. He threw it on a chair, and she stood before him in a dress of some soft dark material, with white at the neck and wrists. It fitted her well—it fell well around her supple figure.

'My gloves,' she said apologetically, 'were soaked through. They are drying in your housekeeper's room. I dried them myself for half an hour before she would disturb you.'

As she spoke, there crossed Tempest's feelings, growing more and more amiable and gracious, a sudden revulsion against her which she could not have understood had he let her perceive it.

'How can I further your career or hinder it?' he asked formally.

She did not appear to take umbrage at his altered tone, but, leaning forward in her chair, took him into her confidence with extraordinary facility and an assurance that was a compliment in itself.

'I have been obliged quite suddenly to find a means of livelihood. To a woman of my age' (she named it, and he smiled—it was so young) 'such a question coming for the first time, is puzzling. Last week the editor of a well-known monthly offered me

a position at a fixed and generous salary, if . . .' Here she paused.

As she talked, Tempest was studying her mentality and quality of spirit as best he could, being a man as well as a psychologist, and given the fact that a specimen was very good to look at and very gently magnetic to listen to. He found her direct, and boldly devoid of weak truckling excuses for whatever favour she was to ask—and she was evidently to ask one. He liked her clear enunciation, her soft, short sentences, with the warmth under them of an exquisite voice.

'If what?' he helped her.

'If I would fetch him an especial piece of work he was eager for.'

'Yes?' questioned her host, for she hesitated. '

'An essay, if you like—a study of—you: of your personality, above all'—here she flushed and lowered her voice, as though the subject and her own daring awed her—'a synopsis of your new suite of poems, Mr. Tempest.'

Then, in a voice whose sharpness struck her as if her senses had all been touched at once—she shrank at it—he asked: 'Who spoke to them of the verses?'

'I,' she replied, breathless. 'There were only two of them, you know, published in the winter.'

'What suite?' he interrupted, glaring at her. The veins swelled on his temples. He had risen, and she thought he seemed a dozen feet high. 'What suite? What do you mean?'

Miss Carewleaned forward, her hands clasped before her. 'I once read two poems of yours—masterpieces. They were only a prologue and an epilogue. I have eagerly been looking for the others in vain.'

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'You are mad!' he blurted out rudely, walked away from her across the room, and got in between table and window, his back to her. After a second he drew the curtain aside and exposed the black, raincovered pane to the room's light.

She was not, singularly enough, frightened to death. It would be too much to say she felt a power over Mr. Tempest. She had it, however.

'Perhaps I am mad. I feel sometimes one must be, to comprehend and be sensitive to certain forms of beauty . . . and greatness.'

Mr. Tempest came slowly back into the room, holding his hand over his eyes. 'Will you tell them for me,—your public—that there are no more verses to follow these? that there is nothing whatsoever to come out of this muddled and miserable brain of Basil Tempest?... Will you tell them that Tempest is never to write another line so long as he lives?'

He was conscious that Miss Carew had risen, that she was standing not far away. She had gathered her cloak on her arm.

'No,' she said distinctly, 'I will not tell them that.'
His eyes still covered, Tempest shrugged his shoulders. 'Tell them what you please; but—will you—go? Now—I thank you—but go. You are very good—very good—and clever. I hope I shall not balk your career; women should not have careers.'

He heard a door close, the portière fall; he uncovered his eyes—he was alone.

With an imprecation low and sincere he stood for a moment, his hands clenched by his side, his face dark and terrible. All likeness to genius and good looks—for it possessed both—was gone from his face. He seemed brooding on horrors. His hair fell over his brow, his head was bent. His eyes now showed bloodshot and full of tears. As strong as he was weak in his emotions, he was now utterly swayed by them. He brushed away his tears like a boy with the back of his hand. After he had stood so for what seemed to him a few moments, but was really a long time, a gust of wind and rain struck violently against the window, and he started. With no care to put his disturbed countenance in order for curious eyes, he went out to find Mrs. Henly in her little room, a corridor or so away.

- 'Where is the lady you forced upon me, Henly?'
- 'Gone, Mr. Basil.'
- 'How "gone"?'
- 'On foot—and alone in the storm.'

Mrs. Henly's tone, if it could, would have sent Miss Carew dryshod.

- 'What folly and stupidity! Why did you permit it, Henly? You use judgment and discretion, what did you let her go for like that?'
- 'She would hear of nothing else, sir—she seemed disturbed.'

Without further parley he turned on his heel and marched out to the cloak-room, hatted and cloaked himself, and went from there to the stables. Although it did not consume many minutes, the putting between shafts and buckling up of the horse, Tempest fumed at the groom and with nervous haste himself threw in rubber blanket and rugs. It was pouring in sheets when he came pelting out of the stable; the man threw loose the mare's head, and the fresh beast started rapidly out into the roadway.

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Tempest had asked for a horse notably neither his fastest nor best, but a sure animal who had eyes for the dark like a cat's and who could have felt her way to Cravenford.

The Master of Craven hardly hoped to discover so soon as the park road the guest so rudely allowed to leave his doors. Even a poor walker would have made the drive and the turn into the main road that led to Cravenford. Nevertheless he peered, and, as it was far from dark, it seemed needless to lean forward as Tempest did to search the roadside for so conspicuous an object as a pedestrian young woman of no mean height or figure.

His horse pounded through the mud, bit well in her teeth, her head down; the short incessant rain was a spur. Tempest thought of the high heels of the lady's shoes, and grew hot with shame. 'Feminine folly!' he muttered; 'what modern twentieth-century emancipation! A young woman, not only independent but secure in her lack of convention! Fancy one of our grandmothers appearing in fichu and curls and crinoline at a man's house alone, unchaperoned! Not only would this girl have scorned me if I had dared show appreciation of her sex, but it would have been the height of ruffianism to have been gallant—the acme of ungallantness.'

Yet, as he mentally compared her to the summoned image of the 1830 lady, Miss Carew lost none of her attractiveness in her plain dress, the sharp note of white at neck and wrists, the taille cambrée, the svelte beauty of her figure.

'It's absurd!' he muttered, 'this emancipation of

'It's absurd!' he muttered, 'this emancipation of women. They've no right or title to it. For example, now, if I were not driving to her rescue,

where would she be, poor dear!' He smiled. 'She would melt in the storm.'

As before him the road grew indistinct: 'Gad! I should have fetched Melton to drive—I can't make out the road. She must have flown, to have gone so well on—to escape the boor I was. No wonder!'

Here the mare shied violently, and in holding the cart to balance and quieting her Tempest almost failed to see the cause of the fright. Out of the rain and darkness a figure on a stone had risen.

'Miss Carew!' (she hardly recognised the voice, it was so full of live welcome), 'won't you get in at once, please? Here, at this side. I can't help you unfortunately, or leave my seat. Can you manage it? She won't stand.'

Miss Carew displayed neither ill-temper nor grudge. In a twinkling she had climbed into the cart—was at his side.

'You will let me drive you back to Craven—warm you, feed you, show you hospitality? I am chagrined, Miss Carew.' He had started to turn.

'To the station, please, Mr. Tempest, if it isn't too much to ask.'

He was sufficiently impressed by what he believed was the will of the modern woman not to gainsay her.

'I don't wish to obey you—but I have no choice. Put on this mackintosh, please, and cover yourself with this rubber—there, over us both. There's a shorter cut to the town if you will tell me if there is a stile—just there it would be—to the right.'

'Yes.'

'Then we turn here, and should reach Cravenford in three quarters of an hour. Hush,' he said as she

thanked him. 'Trouble! . . . I am ashamed of myself: don't make me feel more so. Tell me, if I am not too curious, where you are bound for, Miss Carew?'

'To London to-night—and to America the day after to-morrow.'

Tempest caught his breath. 'You mean you were serious! You came to England to see me, and are going back on the first ship?'

'Yes,' she said simply.

'But I never heard such a venture! Is all reporting work like that? Seven thousand miles for . . .'

'Success—yes,' she finished. 'I suppose so. It seemed to them worth it. I should of course have succeeded.'

'But you have travelled before — you know Europe?'

'Oh yes,' she said. 'I was in school in France. I have travelled, but I have never been in England before.'

'You must stay,' he cried enthusiastically. 'England's a garden, and this county especially lovely. Why, Penthuen Castle is within two miles of me—Raynes and the forest of Raynes.'

'I know,' said his companion. "Here to the west, low shelving to the sea. . . ." and she repeated one of Tempest's sonnets written fifteen years before. Her manner of speaking it was delightful, undeclamatory, understanding, and simple.

He said nothing when she ceased. He did not speak again until they had entered the small hamlet of Cravenford and drew up at the station under a red lantern that swung from the eaves in the rain.

Two men in rain-coats stood smoking their pipes under the roof shelter. At Tempest's 'Hallo' one of them came out to the platform edge. 'Is that you, Mr. Tempest, sir?'

'Yes: hold the mare, will you, Ramsdill?'

'There'll be no London train to-night, sir—a haccident Slug Morges way. No trains out before to-morrow.'

There was a moment's silence on the part of the people in the trap. Then the lady said: 'But there are other trains, surely, to other stations?'

'None either way to-night, m'm,' Mr. Ramsdill assured her.

Tempest stood up in the cart, and shook out his hat, from which the water ran. Ramsdill at the mare's head patted her neck; the sweat running from her wet sides was drowned back on her by the rain.

'I have chosen Craven, Miss Carew, in order that I might be quite out of the world: it has proved to me often that I have succeeded, but never so thoroughly as to-night! There's the station, an alehouse, and a few farms; you can't stay in any of them. We'll drive back, then, at once to warmth and light.'

She thanked him, but refused to hear of it. 'I shall stay in some one of those houses if they will have me.'

He got out of the cart.

'There's a fire in the station, Ramsdill?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Let me help you out, Miss Carew. Please come in for a few moments, and let us see each other, and get out of this infernal dark.' She presented a pitiable sight: drenched through, her hair clinging to her face, her clothing clinging to her like ivy to a tree. He exclaimed with contrition and anger, and drew her to the fire, into the red glow.

'You will be ill,—your feet and stockings must be dripping. Drink this.' He had his flask and forced her to take a generous draught. To all she was obedient.

'Now,' he said determinedly, 'you must go back with me: don't retaliate so cruelly! Mrs. Henly will care for you like a mother. I can't leave you here.'

But wet, meek as her drenched hair made her look, her reddening cheeks proved that all her blood was not beaten out of her by the rain.

'You must leave me here, Mr. Tempest.'

'I wish,' he said impatiently, 'you were not an American and a modern woman.'

She turned her hands before the blaze, and he saw how fine they were, how slender and distinguished.

'I am both, however,' she replied, with a little smile. 'I have failed—and I am going back.'

Tempest without further parley went to the door and called to Ramsdill: 'Can your wife put this lady—Miss Carew—up for the night, Ramsdill? Give her a good bed and some hot dinner and some dry things?'

Tempest had made of Craven and the Ford a shrine for all the county, and for reasons more human than for his genius alone, was adored.

'I expect the missis'll be pleased to, Mr. Tempest.'

'Come, then,' he ordered over his shoulder to the girl, in a tone as masterful as if he had not been

beaten. 'Ramsdill has a very decent cottage, not half a mile from the castle; 'tis clean and well kept, and Polly Ramsdill is a nice creature. I'll let you stay there—or at the castle.' He waited impatiently as she put her foot on the step of the cart.

She chose composedly: 'Mrs. Ramsdill's, please.'

On the long wet way back, he said: 'I've been a boor,—will you forgive me?'

'You have been most kind, Mr. Tempest.'

'No-no: tell me, please, you forgive me?'

'How can you ask it? I should never have so forced myself——'

'You do, then?—I am obstinate—say the words.'

'Well, then, I do of course forgive you, Mr. Tempest.'

'Will you prove it?'

'If I can.'

The Ramsdill cottage, a type of hundreds of loweaved, vine-covered, nestling houses, sent out into the rain its one ruddy star through a small windowpane. As the cart approached the door opened, and a cheerful bar of light cut into the dark.

'Now,' said Tempest, 'one more favour, Ramsdill. Can they spare you here to-night? If so, will you drive me back to Craven? I've sprained my wrist, and it has been all I could do to get my mare to the Ford.'

Lucy Carew opened her eyes the next morning in the blaze of brilliant day. The 10th of November broke in holiday and golden fashion, after a night of wild, unusual storm. In the coarse night-dress of her kind hostess she lay in her clean bed in the country-smelling little attic. She had scarcely

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stirred to rise when a knock at her door held her motionless.

Mrs. Ramsdill, red-cheeked, bashful-eyed, came in like a bright apparition, for she looked at her lodger over a giant bouquet: the profusion filled her hands—she arrived like Flora. She had a note, and gave it.

'If you please, Miss, from Craven. There's a hanswer to take.'

She regarded with pretty timid curiosity this handsome young lady, who stood well out of the short night-dress, her feet gleaming well-displayed below the hem. Above the low plain collar her neck and dark head rose frankly. Women—beautiful ones—do not imagine how much to their beauty's enhancing are sometimes the naïve garments of their simple sisters. Ribbons and furbelows would not have made Lucy Carew more lovely to look on than the English cottager saw her: the coarse muslin over her swelling breast, her arms bare to the elbows—for Mrs. Ramsdill's gown stopped there.

Miss Carew took the roses in her hands.

Mrs. Ramsdill had her wonderings. Tempest was beloved, but he was as well known. Even Cravenford could tell its tales. The good creature mused on her guest, and remarked the eyes—how they lost their clearness to sparkle, how her cheeks mantled as the letter, with entire ignoring of her company, was broken open.

'I'll wait outside, miss,' she delicately suggested, 'and you'll call me for the answer.'

Miss Carew held the roses against her and read her note.

CRAVEN, November 10.

MY DEAR MISS CAREW,—If what you tell me is true (and how can I suppose you came three thousand miles to play with my vanity!) then you will feel it worth your while to write the study of which you spoke—unless my conduct as host has blackened me too much in your eyes.

If you will come—I have sent a carriage—to Craven, I will do all in my power to make it easy for you to write what you wish. There will be no train to London before late afternoon. If you refuse me this proof of your entire cordiality, I shall come to the Ford. To avoid me you will have to walk, and I fancy your shoes will not help you!—Faithfully,

BASIL TEMPEST.

For the first time in weeks Mr. Tempest slept till morning, and for the first time in weeks awakened not a prey to the black horrors that generally perched on his bed-post to await the opening of his eyes. 'If,' as he had often grumbled, 'one could only get into the day without beginning it!'

To superintend the gathering of a bunch of roses, to write the note he had sent, amused him; and no sooner was Ramsdill with the trap despatched than, whistling like a boy, he made a tour of the house, followed by Mrs. Henly, to whom he gave countless directions as to the setting of Craven in holiday trim. Sunlight flashed at him everywhere. It fell in luxurious floods down the long galleries—routed melancholy out of nooks in the darkest rooms, whose ghosts and dismal shadows Tempest had grown to consider as familiars, nested and hatched.

'What a day!' he exclaimed more than once. 'Open everything,—throw all the windows wide. No, I will arrange the flowers myself!' The

gardener had fetched in what Tempest called 'torrents of bloom,' and he glowed with enjoyment as he piled roses and carnations and lilies into glass and silver according to his fancy. Once he caught up his buoyant mood to say, 'What if the adventurous lady should refuse?' His brow darkened. 'She will not; she will come,' he decided, with an arrogance for which years of success were responsible.

At near noon wheels were heard on the terrace gravel, and he went out to meet her and lifted her out of the trap.

'You've brought this weather with you from the States, where I hear everything is golden.' He had not released her hand which he took in welcome. 'Leave me a calendar full of days like this when you go, won't you, so that I can call on them when I like?' He had drawn her into his study window, and was by her side.

Before them miles and miles of meadow-land swayed and rippled and undulated like an inland sea hemmed in on all sides by a thick forest; the trees were still in yellow leafage, and made a halo of gold around the valleying land. No house was in sight. Directly in front stretched a thick green turf, and to meet it the stone terrace with pillared mossy railing.

Whilst the American feasted her eyes on the scene's melting beauty, Tempest talked to her as perhaps he of all the world could have talked. He told her tales of the shire in a humorous, mystic fashion, pried out for her the secrets, the traditions of the county, and its humble, pretty legends. From these he passed to the scenes of *The Revelation*,

his latest novel, laid here, and gave her a sketch of the history of the creation and development of the book. Then finally he said: 'Come, let me show you the place where I found Lettice Grammont.'

His bewitched listener followed him in a dream, walking on air, enchanted. Hatless they both slipped out from the terrace into a little park, Tempest leading; and suddenly she found herself in what went for a bit of woodland. At the side of a meadow-brown brook, upon whose well-like waters the trees had sent barques of withered leaves to be whirled and destroyed, Tempest said: 'Stand there, please, where you are, by that birch.'

Miss Carew obeyed the fancy and stood motionless whilst filtering down upon her one by one the flecks and circles of sunlight fell through the leaves dancing on her brown hair and her brown dress.

Tempest, his brows knit but his expression radiant, watched her, smiling. 'Do you by any chance remember the book, Miss Carew?'

'Oh, well.'

'And you liked it?' His tone was almost timid; he waited in suspense for her response.

It struck her as curious that her opinion about a work already translated into four languages and whose merit was a household word should be asked. 'Like it!' she exclaimed,—and he was answered.

He crossed the brook from her, extended his hand and helped her over. 'I am glad,' he said fervently.

Luncheon had followed in a small breakfast-room whose air was domesticity and intimacy: a faultle

meal, faultlessly served, the light rioting in the reflecting surfaces of glass and silver, and dazzling on the cloth.

It was past three when Miss Carew found that she had made the tour of Craven under the guidance of the host himself.

'I must go, Mr. Tempest.'

'Nonsense!' he exclaimed impatiently. 'What for, pray?'

'My train leaves in an hour for London.'

'What train of yours? You have no time, no destination—have you—other than this one spot of the Old World? What is waiting for you in London?'

To his direct query, made testily and sharply, she did not reply, but simply held her hand out to him in good-bye.

He did not refuse to take the hand, which in his felt prisoned. 'You have been amusing yourself, I see—this has been a little jaunt from London to what you have made in your romantic mind a shrine? I have made myself ridiculous in taking it seriously.'

She withdrew her hand and coloured at his tone. 'I have told you quite the truth, Mr. Tempest. I sail to-morrow.'

'Without your essay?'

'I must, since you refuse.'

'But I don't!' he interrupted. 'It shall be written! You have my word. But you must be patient. You are a woman of penetration: you must see that a man of moods can't master them all—not all. It takes so much character to do away with one strong habit that the others grow meanwhile, and then all of a sudden, as he rises up with

one poor little uprooted weed in his hand, he finds himself in a forest—the others have grown overnight.'

The gloom she had in her short acquaintance with him grown to dread, was enveloping him.

'Really, Miss Carew, I'm not an eccentric—don't say it in your study. Let me prove to you how commonplace I am. I'll keep my word too. If you will realise that the chief reason your editor wants this absurd article (forgive me) is because it's the only one—it shall be yours. Didn't you see the skeletons and skulls of the unfortunate reporters who have been devoured at my gates? To-day I wanted the pleasure that I have had. To-morrow

She showed her perplexity.

'You must have your things, of course: telegraph for them; or better, I'll have them telephoned for. Polly can make you comfortable for a day or two. Is it—the article—worth this bit of effort?'

No thought was in Lucy Carew's mind of worth or effort. She knew she could never write about this dark-browed, elusive man. Her chief instinct was that she must go—but her will was not with her instinct.

She consented, therefore, that the telephone message should be sent, and to remain at the friendly cottage for a couple of days.

We are none of us so blases with pleasure or excitement that we cannot bear at least one repetition of a good thing! Miss Carew found that she was quite able to endure the repetition at an early hour of the roses of yesterday and a note from Mr. Tempest.

A second autograph from a celebrity gave her no thought of its value in future Tempestiana—and she opened the envelope with only a flutter of personal feeling, of surprise and delight.

It was not a letter—it was a verse short and perfect! one she knew and loved. It ran in clear, heavy script over a sheet of thick paper—the envelope had lain in the roses.

She read it—drank in its fragrance and beauty with the flowers' scent—put the envelope with the letter under the pillow, and the roses to outbloom the still lovely ones of yesterday side by side on the stand in her low-roofed room—then went down to the waiting carriage.

Mrs. Henly met her and showed her into the study, regarded her with benignant approval, and left her alone.

Here in the workshop she waited an hour for the lord of Craven, patiently at first, then with embarrassment. Her observation of the details of the room, an inventory of the books, was long over before he came, full of apologies.

'I have been walking your twelve miles or more, otherwise I could not have seen you to-day, much as I wanted to. I had a bad spirit with me for company, but I tired him out, left him afield, and I have come back alone.'

His voice was joyous and fresh, his face full of animation; and as he frankly took her hand between both of his she was a prisoner held by an irresistible force. When he let her hand go it was with an abruptness which not only set her free, but put her, as it were, away from him. He asked if she were comfortable at Mrs. Ramsdill's, if her boxes had

come in season, and glanced at her appearance. It should have satisfied even a tyro on women's habiliments, for from shoes to hat Miss Carew was faultless in her simple toilet.

'You have taken up the most difficult profession in the world,' he said. 'I say "taken up": if you're forced to it—cursed to it—by temper and talent, that's one thing; but to write simply—for example, as a profession, why, it's slavery! Do you,' he demanded curtly, 'write well?'

'No,' she confessed at once.

'Of course you don't!' he accepted with satisfaction. 'You couldn't,—why should you? You lack the essentials. D'abord genius—you've not got that: experience and more misery and happiness—but both, mark you! both are indispensable—and you...' he paused and scanned her face with an intensity which whilst it fascinated her make her shrink,'... you have had neither.'

Without demur, and with an evident distaste to prolonging the personal theme, she said, 'May I begin to make my notes, Mr. Tempest?'

He smiled. 'Will you sit there at my table?'

He put the chair in place, drew before her paper and a choice of pens, ink, and sharpened pencils, left her side and went round in front of her, where he sat down facing her, closing his eyes and folding his arms across his breast.

'Write,' he commanded, 'what I dictate, please, as fast as you can.'

In a low and measured tone, as if every word were a pearl and he weighed it, as if every phrase were a jewel which he held up to see its quality, Tempest began to compose. Not in verse, but in an even sonorous prose as rich as it was free from mannerism and ambiguity.

The scribe wrote like lightning and listened spell-bound as she wrote. The power of what she was going to transcribe shook her as Tempest developed the theme and warmed to his subject. Once as he paused she raised her eyes to him, her own ardent, deep, full of emotion, in tribute for the genius she had been permitted to see. She was unconscious how much of herself her uplifted face betrayed.

Tempest, as if she had bidden his eyelids to lift, opened his eyes, stopped speaking. A flush came into his face, he unfolded his arms and stirred.

'Wait,' he murmured—'don't move.' He held her eyes for a second, then fell back—set her free refolded his arms and continued his dictation.

Miss Carew filled page after page with rapid characters. When he had definitely ceased, she sighed and dropped her pencil. If she had yielded to impulse, she would have buried her head on her arms and so remained under the spell that had magnetised her. Too tactful in the presence of this uncontrolled and personal man to betray anything of herself or her feelings, she sat without comment or movement.

Tempest came up to her and lifted her right hand.

- 'You are tired out, Miss Carew.'
- 'Oh no-no!'
- 'But you sighed.'
- 'Because it was at an end.'
- 'That's graceful. You have written two hours.' He gathered up the sheets and piled them slowly together. 'Why do you push your chair back?'

'I must. I shall be late for Mrs. Ramsdill's lunch.'

'Mrs. Ramsdill——' He caught himself. 'You lunch here.'

'No,' she said firmly; 'not to-day, Mr. Tempest.'

Then he said tentatively: 'You are tired, of course? I'm a brute, but you may as well know it—a brute, absorbed and egotistical.'

'You don't think it, Mr. Tempest—not of yourself—and I am tired. I suppose my twelve-mile walk is still in my bones.'

An extraordinarily gentle look came over his face, his lips parted as if to say something, which he altered.

'I won't keep you, then: go, and rest with Mrs. Ramsdill to coddle you—she's a dear little soul. But to-morrow, please, you shall work for yourself, I promise you.'

As she drew on her gloves, he said: 'I have not written one line in six months. To a man of my temperament no one knows what that means, of nerves and bad-humour and—despair. I will not bore you with my migraine, but I thank you more than you can know, Miss Carew.' At the carriage he said: 'I hope you will lunch well, and remember that I let you go only from an unselfish scruple. I can say without exaggeration it's an epoch in a self-indulgent life.'

She lunched at Mrs. Ramsdill's like a queen, for Tempest had sent fruit and wine and game. The table in the cottage kitchen had a royal air, for the service was from Craven, and the wine in dusty bottles, and the fruit—great black and green globes of lusciousness, and golden apricots—piled in a silver basket as fragile and white as snow. The Ramsdill linen blushed to find itself in such com-

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pany, and the homely blue and white ware that slipped in to fill out what Craven had not supplied, appeared to have cracked and cracked with abashment.

Mrs. Ramsdill served with something like awe, and regarded Miss Carew with a respect not unmixed with such suspicion as has place in every honest woman's heart when a man showers undue favours on another of her sex.

II

The day was early over the meadows, and the first dews lying with the frost upon the stubble fields when Tempest came out of the house to the terrace where his horse waited.

The avenues before him were nests of golden and brown leaves, and his mare at first went gingerly into them with pretty careful steps, picking her footing and shrinking as they cracked and rustled. At the foot of the avenue he skirted the railings of the park in search of a small gate for pedestrians and leading out into the road towards Billings Poke and Craven.

He had an idea, doubtless a very reasonable one, that if Miss Carew was as serious and good as she seemed she had every plan to run away—or to slip out of Craven by the morning train.

'She could not slip out before. Not' (and he smiled at the idea) 'unless she start again on foot, which I have no doubt she would be capable of doing if she knew me to be so early on the chase.'

At Ramsdill's, Polly told him the lady had already

started to walk to the train, and Tim was to follow her later with her boxes.

Tempest, in whom the invigorating day awakened the best of spirits, was delighted. He wanted to find her flying! It pleased him to see his psychology was not at fault, and that he should as well have the pleasure of the chase.

'Yes,' he nodded to Polly, who, demure and admiring, stood by the gate delivering her news. 'Yes, I knew Miss Carew intended to leave, but I have a telephone for her, an important message which may keep her—possibly. At any rate I must find her. Why did she start so soon?'

It seemed that Miss Carew had wished to go up Charm's Hill, and in order to catch the train she would be coming down Wood Lane in an hour. Tempest rode away. At the end of Wood Lane, just a little to the roadside, he saw the figure of a lady—the only lady in Cravenford, of course. She stood under a beech tree, or under all there was left of its fine luxuriance: the leaves had rained around her in abundance.

Tempest took the direction and rode across fields to her side.

Miss Carew's surprise and wonder were an added pleasure to him. He was laughing as he came up, and greeted her:

'I have never believed anything was really lost, you know!' He spoke as if to answer her. 'They used to send me to find things for them when I was a little chap; the fact of their being lost made me angry directly, and I started out invariably with my teeth set and saying, "I will find that at once." I usually did. I was invaluable for lost scissors and

thimbles and spools. Henly will tell you, . . . and here you are, possibly not really *lost*—but if I had been an hour later, it would have been close to it!'

This was not Craven. There was no master here of a house where she had presumably no right to be. They were in the open, the fresh, delicious fields, in the fresh delicacy of the day around them, shining in their eyes, touching their cheeks.

'How did you, nevertheless, find me here?' she asked. 'You must have second sight.'

He exclaimed in an undertone: 'Second sight! If I have, I have used it better than I ever did the first... if this is its mission. At all events I felt morally sure you would go this morning in sheer impatience with me... and so it seems.'

'Yes,' said Miss Carew, 'I shall have to start for the station in a few seconds.'

Tempest drew out his watch. 'We have half an hour. I will see that you do not miss your train unwillingly.'

Nothing could have happened to the girl to so startle and surprise her, to so disturb her, as this unexpected arrival of the man whom she had determined to never see again. No better use can be made of independence than to make it serve as a warder before all the doors of freedom, and as a guide who knows the *impasse dangereuse* and circles it.

Tempest holding his horse's rein—he had dismounted and stood by her—was in a new mood, gay, luminous; she thought she had never seen such a transformation of a face. It was as full of brilliance as it had been full of melancholy.

'I wrote you a note,' the girl said timidly. 'Mrs. Ramsdill was to post it.'

- 'You did! I will get it from her.'
- 'Oh no-since you have seen me.'

He shook his head. 'I want all my letters, and I am curious to see how you took leave. . . . But that is just what I beg you will not take—that is, to-day.'

The gentleman who stood by his horse's head she could regard for some reason even with less ease than hitherto she had been able. In his riding-clothes he seemed to have lost his other personality, and was nothing but a well-looking Englishman, in the most fashionable *tenue*, who had ridden to see her at an unusual hour over a dewy field.

'You have, then, definitely given up the sketch, Miss Carew?'

'Yes,' she said, and to his surprise.

'Ah! I can't, of course, gainsay your good taste there,' he smiled. 'I accept that—I suppose I must pay the penalty of my lack of good faith. . . . But it's not about that I have ridden over—it is to beg you will delay your going: I can't read one word of your writing . . . not a word.'

She looked amused, and said, 'No one ever told me that before.'

'Put it, then, to my lack of education,' he laughed, but please come and read it to me, Miss Carew—or at least help me to decipher it.'

The village clock struck in the remote distance some part of the hour, and Miss Carew started. 'There...it is half-past seven, Mr. Tempest. I must go.'

'You mean you won't come to Craven to-day and read your manuscript to me?'

She hesitated.

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'Why? Why not?' he asked quietly.

If he had searched his wit through he could not have fallen upon a better question. He blocked her path—his horse's coat reddening in the sunlight that now began to brighten.

'Why won't you come?'

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Why should she not? In all the world to care—or praise or blame—she saw only the trim figure of Polly Ramsdill and her honest curious eyes. As if there were Polly alone to know or remark, weakly she said, 'Mrs. Ramsdill thinks I have left Cravenford.'

Exultant, but keeping his triumph under, Mr. Tempest said, 'No, she doesn't. I stopped there in passing, and told her—not quite an untruth—that an important message had come for you, which might delay you . . .'

They had started to walk along side by side across the fields. His bridle was over his arm as she walked beside him—lovely in the weakness and the grace a woman's yielding makes her in a man's eyes. Tempest, even then—in the barren field, the open road near by—Tempest contemplated stealing his arm around her and drawing her to him. . . . What would she do? What did she feel of the rush and throb his pulse and brain trembled under? A fierce joy at his victory came across his face as it bent upon her its recklessness and devil-may-care freedom. 'Only a day,' he mused, 'an hour,—and, my God, haven't I a right to tear from fate what I can?'

He may have been about to speak to her—to touch her—when she unexpectedly turned to him her frank, pure eyes. There was something so virgin, so young, so good, in her face, transcending her beauty, that THE MASTER OF CRAVEN

he was ashamed. The miraculous purity of her unspoiled country seemed typified in her... His spirit changed with him, and his voice was very gentle as he said, 'Thank you very much indeed. I shall look for you this afternoon. Shall I send for you, or will you walk?'

'I'll walk,' said Miss Carew; and he accepted her decision, saying, 'Then I'll mount and leave you here; you will simply tell Mrs. Ramsdill that you have planned to stay on for a day or two because of your message.'

He shook her hand, and getting on his horse took leave of her in the lane.

But at four o'clock his carriage came for her; he was evidently not in a mood to wait for her arrival.

Mrs. Ramsdill came in to Lucy Carew with the announcement, and a note.

'Will you not plan to dine here?' it ran. 'If you are a rigid conventionalist Mrs. Henly shall sit and knit in her corner.'

To Mrs. Ramsdill's presence, to her slightly pursedup lips, to her 'air,' was due the response that went to Mr. Tempest; for, looking suddenly up, Miss Carew caught a sight of her sister woman's face, and it gave her pause. Was she a coward and did not dare to take her life without fear of a peasant woman's comment? Or did the look on the humble, good face reflect only what was in Lucy's own heart —a fear, a dread, distrust, and a certain shame?

She wrote a note and sent it in her stead. But she could not, like a creature with no mind or will, entirely refuse the favour she had granted.

'I am sorry, but I cannot come to-day. I will go to Craven to-morrow between two and three.'



H

Tempest so intensely desired what he took the trouble to want at all, that he had no rule for the bearing of disappointments; he had until lately admitted none. To accomplish what he deigned to desire he put out whatever effort was required on his part, and with magnetism and intensity drew things toward him. The facility with which things slipped to his hand spoiled him. Petulant of habit, impatient and turbulent of temper, he never waited; when his wish for variety was delayed he went for it and snatched it to himself.

But lately his life had undergone a change. Precedent no longer would, he knew, be indicative of his future. His future!—curse the word and epoch! Why should he consent to accept one?

During the last three days his mind had been resting in the contemplation of gentle things. It had amused and entertained him to take pleasure in the society of this woman of another continent, whose presence alone was so extraordinary, whose advent was so droll and unusual.

He was with women as with other things; tyrannical, an absolutist boldly asking and taking pleasure where he chose, with more of the brute perhaps than the angel in his composition, and a great fund of affection to give and waste, a great hungry need of companionship to be filled. Except for the periods when he shut himself up in Craven, periods of isolation and fast, there had never been a time in his life not dominated by a woman. He had, for such as himself, scoffed at marriage; claiming that its doux esclavage would fatally exorcise his inspirations, and

that he would make 'a devilish bad husband.' During this last exile at Craven he had alternately given thanks for his liberty and the fact that no woman was forced to share his miasmatic humours, and alternately hated his uncompanioned hearth.

But he was utterly unprepared for the note which came instead of Lucy Carew. He read it, the look of content his thought of her coming called forth scarcely cold on his face; he re-read and turned it over, in hopes that she would on the last page change her cruel mind! Then he flung it down with an angry exclamation and looked about his lonely rooms. They had lately been to him worse than lonely, and an involuntary shiver passed over him as he glanced at corners where ghostlike habitants were growing tenacious in possession. At the side of the windowcasing hung a mirror in an old brass frame, between the vivid lights of the full afternoon. Tempest strode up to it, throwing his heavy hair from his forehead, gazed into the glass, peered in, searching the cold reflecting surface as if he would tear from it some flaming miraculous revelation of himself.

Turning away with a sigh, he rang for his manservant.

'Pack me a valise, and order the motor-car: we take the London express; wire for rooms at the Carlton.'

Either his desire for Miss Carew's society was not sufficiently strong to warrant his usual brusque storming of her door, or he may have felt a danger not before acknowledged in his relations with women. He did not so much as look toward the rose-covered cottage at the back of its cabbage and hollyhock patch as his motor flashed by it, and Lucy Carew, as chance would have it, was not there to observe his sudden departure. She had gone for a long tramp over fields, and even then was looking at Craven and its towers from a distant hill.

Lady Ormond was one of those women who are part of pleasure as flowers are of feasts. She and her type are needed to make part of the—happiness? -the festivals, rather, that are held in order to awaken what goes in love's stead throughout the lives of many men, and to stimulate what is the more heavy-footed brother of ecstasy, excitement. She was a thorough woman of the world: intelligent, without ever having followed an idea to its source or conclusion; sympathetic, without ever having in her life been touched; caressing, without ever having known what love was in the course of her thirty-odd years. The nearest approach to reality had been her sentiment for the man to whom for several years she had given her time and her society—with whom fashion had linked her name. No nature could come into relation with Basil Tempest without broadening: were it as narrow as a hair, it must expand or break. and Letitia Ormond's had expanded to its utmost limit—indeed, so far that it created a gêne with her, and at times actually hurt.

Tempest had gradually drunk of the deepest waters she had to offer, and she knew it. The fact that she had no more refreshing draught to give him at his imperious demand, that he had reached the bed of the stream, would have desolated a woman who really loved. But Lady Ormond wanted to escape—not Tempest, exactly, but the fact of her deficiency.

She knew she could never be again to another what she had been to him, and that if he could come to her as he had originally, with the like enthusiasm, the like forceful demand, she would be anew carried away by his charm. Such a Tempest could not come again. In their gradual drifting apart she had not suffered; she had prepared her interests, new claims were ready to assert themselves, and she grew to accept his frequent absences without reproach.

Lady Ormond was 'up for Sunday,' to entertain some Americans passing through London; and standing under the careful adjustment of lights, surrounded by half a dozen of the most-sought men in London, she looked with surprise to see Tempest making his way through the crowded room to her. His eyes were on her, and he half stumbled against a chair in his way. Awkwardness was foreign to him; he was intolerant of it in others, and so cruelly self-conscious, that Lady Ormond flushed for him, reflecting the dark red of his face when he came up and put out his hand.

'Every one has been asking for you. Why did you not come to Gossmere? When did you arrive?'

He had been given place by her with common consent. The men, after greeting him, gradually slipped away—all save the American guest, who gazed at Basil Tempest wide-eyed, as one might at a star.

- 'I have arrived in town within this hour,' Tempest said.
- 'Mr. Tempest'—Lady Ormond turned to the American—'knows how to maintain his popularity:

he goes away before his public have half enough of him, and returns before they are tired of wondering where he is. For my part, I hate brusque departures. I want to be prepared—I don't like sudden goodbyes.'

She held out her hand to the American and said rather imperiously, 'Will you ask Lady Winifred Sales to dance, Mr. Bainbridge? She is alone over there by the palms,'—thus cutting short Bainbridge's hero-worship.

'And'—Tempest took her up several phrases back
—'sudden returns?—you dislike them?'

She was femininely conscious that he had taken note of every detail of her sparkling beauty; and meeting his eyes agreeably, said with grace: 'Your returns are never sudden: I am always bringing you back in my mind. So you see, Basil, you are always expected.'

His face brightened excessively. 'That's the prettiest speech I ever heard a woman make. . . . Come, come with me out of this crush, can't you? I have something especial to say, and you know that I do not understand the art of waiting.'

She nodded and smiled, delighted to perceive herself glad to see him, and that his sudden return without warning did not find her cold.

He followed her across the ball-room to the opposite side, where a room decorated with lilies and orchids gave them a corner planned and set apart for just such *causeries intimes* as Tempest destined it to secure.

Lady Ormond sat down in the corner of a little divan, Tempest beside her.

'Letty'—he lifted her hand to his lips—'Letty, I

exaggerate in my books; they would not be worth writing or reading if I did not. I never really transcribe real life, although they call me the realist. You never heard of a great photographer, did you? Do you think there will be one remembered by men in a hundred years from now? Not unless he has made his pictures as unlike life as possible. Well, I don't exaggerate in my life or speech. I am plain—you have even called me brutal. Now, I am speaking realistically: I've been living in Hell since I left London.'

The marks of suffering were distinct on his face; he looked ill and changed; there was something appealing and touching in his expression—usually arrogance and pride itself. The flippant speech his statement would have called forth from Lady Ormond's humour did not pass her lips. She gave his hand a gentle pressure.

- 'Basil, you look horribly ill. What is the matter? You are changed.'
- 'Am I?' He threw up his head rather defiantly and impatiently, as if to shake off commiseration. 'I've studied my face enough, God knows, these days, but I find it the same.'
 - 'Where have you been?—at Craven?'
- 'Yes, rotting there; shut up like a bear in his cage.'

And you come out to bite, I suppose?'

'Hush!' he said frowning. 'Don't, for God's sake, be flippant; I am not in any mood for it. I've had them all—the moods, Heaven knows; but this is a peculiarly grim one to-night. If you can in any way second it, I will be grateful.'

She looked at him curiously, but not unaffec-

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tionately. 'I'll be as grim as you like, Basil. What do you want me to feel?'

Tempest had covered his eyes with his hands, a gesture growing now second nature to him. He laughed softly as she spoke. 'How perfect of you, Letty! What do I want you to feel? Why, do you command your sentiments to call? Can I have them up at touch? have you so many more for me than one?'

He uncovered his eyes and looked at her smiling. His expression was cynical and amused. 'I don't "want" or "not want" you to feel in any particular way. I want to know how you do feel, and to act accordingly.'

She started: with him at all events a crisis was reached in their relations. She said, to gain time and to collect herself: 'You are quite your most singular self to-night. Je ne suis pas une femme tragique, and I think you might return, after a four weeks' absence, in a little more soothing mood! You are mysterious, and I am bewildered at mysteries. What has gone wrong? Are you dissatisfied with some new creation, or have you lost money?'

He shrugged impatiently. 'You know how little the last would affect me. I am going away on a longer journey than four weeks—and I want you to come with me.'

She withdrew her hand, which he still held—not snatched it, but slowly and meditatively withdrew it. Tempest felt sensitively her complexion of mind: he had surprised but not shocked her. Leaning toward her, in a low tone he pleaded with her, storming her citadel, whose weakness he knew. Afterward, she

thought, in reviewing the moment, that he had pleaded as one for life—as for a raft to be thrown to a drowning man. Was it possible he loved her like this?

'Do you realise what you are asking me to do?' she said in a pause.

'Yes,' he said shortly: 'give up a London and a husband whose life is notorious, whose existence is a plague to you—a reputation amongst those who have none themselves—a false situation for a sincere one—for a life with the man whom you say you love. Ormond will divorce you, and I will marry you at once.'

Lady Ormond had believed that the original Tempest, who had made her forget everything but himself, could not return with the old charm and imperious challenge. She had been wrong, then, in her belief, for he was talking her over again out of herself and beyond her control.

'Why are you like this?' she murmured with some emotion. 'Will you be like this always? If I thought it, I could not hesitate.'

At her tone, certainly not the one of brusque denial he had anticipated, Tempest experienced a curious mingling of exultant victory and of sincere regret.

'To-morrow, Letty,' he said, and took her hand again: 'you must come with me to-morrow.'

In her utter surprise, Lady Ormond was finding herself equal to Tempest's demands. She did not hesitate for one moment to make a concession he had never asked before. He was rich—would be richer; famous, not yet in the zenith of his celebrity. There was in sharing his life just one sacrifice, and

that she determined not to make if she could avoid it.

'Basil!'—she leaned toward him, lifted her head in a way to reveal the clear, pure lines of her neck and chin, her face like a flower turned to the sun—'Basil, I am not cavilling, but you are so impetuous and impracticable. Let me get the divorce from Ormond. It is merely a form—one I can have for the asking. You don't wish to sacrifice me needlessly, do you? You are not so orgueilleux that you must see me humiliated, are you? You are not vain—really, you know: won't you let me get out decently?'

He smiled and sighed. 'Decently!' he repeated with some scorn. 'Can you, Letty?'

'I will see my lawyers to-morrow.'

He frowned and hurried. 'Then you refuse to come with me?'

'No,' she nodded determinedly, 'I don't refuse; if you are set on ruining my reputation, for a whim, why, I won't stand in the way of your egoism.'

He capitulated. 'Well, you have surprised me, Letty; but then you are a perfect type, and I flatter myself now that I can predict the rest. You shall take the narrow and more reputable way as you think it to be. But you won't come with me, Letty—you won't come—

'Nonsense,' she laughed, and covered his lips with her hand. 'You have my word.'

Under the hand which he held to his lips he murmured something. It was 'Good-bye — no respite.'

Lady Ormond was filled with satisfaction. She had been equal to the supreme occasion with Tem-

pest: she was not an ordinary woman, then; she had proved her mettle and distinction, and was worth the greatest man of the hour.

Tempest took his leave early, went to his club and wrote her a note, which she found on her dressing-table when she went late to her room.

Tempest was sitting in the smoking-room of the Carlton when a note was brought, and every eye was turned to him-as the page's voice called, 'Mr. Basil Tempest.' He beckoned the boy and took the letter, which he thrust into his pocket and went up to his apartment. For a few seconds he turned the letter over in his hands as if he wished to defer certainty, his face gloomy, curious, and still mocking. Then going close to the electric light, so that all its force shone on the page, he took the single sheet of paper from the envelope.

'I don't know whether to blame you or myself—you for dreaming a woman can share the life you write me of—I for refusing. I know you still too well to discuss what you say—to advise or suggest. I am not equal to the sacrifice.'

'Bah!' he said, and before he had ended tore it in shreds, and let the pieces fall as they would on the hotel carpet.

'I know people too well,' he said. 'There are no surprises for me. It's a curse to understand your kind—I wish I were a fool. It's only when a man's a fool, or in love, that he has any chance for happiness.'

He stood thinking a second or two, wounded in his vanity—if not broken-hearted; then made his preparations for taking the next train for ——shire.



IV

When at three o'clock the following afternoon Miss Carew arrived at Craven, she was met by Mrs. Henly, who, bustling in before her, said:

'You're to be so good as to wait, miss, in the mornin'-room. I've a fire laid there, and I am to see you have books and papers and whatever you may like, Mr. Tempest telegraphed.'

With her last words she threw open the doors of a room whose atmosphere greeted with its brightness—the colour and light of it seemed to extend hands.

With native habit of assigning ranks and places to Mr. Tempest's familiars, Mrs. Henly had estimated this sudden guest, by her simplicity and her grace, to be of as high breeding and worthy blood as the United States can provide. . . . The housekeeper, the dearest, sweetest creature one could find in cameos and black silk and caps in the responsible position of head of any bachelor gentleman's household, watched her master's affaires de cœur with an interest and sometimes a jealousy as strong as impotent.

Mrs. Henly talked only with her superiors—she knew she had them; her equals, by reason of her being a unique specimen of her type, she had not as yet recognised. Servants were servants to her. She never spoke to them save to give them orders or to minister to one in trouble.

By them she was seen to be a very grande dame indeed—by Tempest to be quite the most flawless pearl of womankind.

Living as she did very isolated at Craven, she was now faintly flushed with appreciative anticipation of the few moments' chat with Miss Carew before the master should appear. Miss Carew had come from the land of freedom, but whilst she suggested its delicious liberty she lost with it no quality. Mrs. Henly's old eyes regarded the figure of the American with favour. Miss Carew asked: 'Mr. Tempest has telegraphed,—is he away?'

'He was obliged to run up to London yesterday of a sudden, just after Shorter fetched in your note.' As though the sight of the master's instructions might beguile the guest, Mrs. Henly spread out the pink bit of paper on the table under her hand and read: 'Miss Carew arrives at three. Make her welcome, give her books and papers. I shall be up by the express.'

'Which means,' Mrs. Henly explained, 'he left London at six this mornin'; it's a nine hours' run. I've sent the motor to Billings Poke—it's a bit shorter by rail. Mr. Basil does hate rail travel.'

Miss Carew did not remark that with apparent ease he took eighteen hours out of the twenty-four for the matter of a short time in town! The despatch, with its minute instructions, read in itself like a welcome to her, and it was a charming place in which to wait.

Craven's Empire morning-room gave on a terraced flower-garden, where to trees already nearly leafless a few November roses clung. The walls, hung in yellow brocade, extended to the dullest day a sense of glow and light. The few pieces of furniture, veritable treasures even in their old epoch, indicated the faultless taste and virtuosity of the selector; before the fire, in the same yellow satin, a small divan with bronze reliefs on shining legs and back,

a few stiff dignified fauteuils, a long centre table, a mirror screen. On the mantel a clock and candelabra, whose graceful infantine subjects suggested the design to have been intended to please the little King of Rome, a biscuit group, a candle-lamp with vivid green shade,—these were all.

'It's a pretty little room,' Mrs. Henly said indulgently. 'All the sun there ever is comes here, but to-day it's a bit chilly, isn't it? So I had the fire lit early.'

She was before it with the bellows, urging the flame. As she raised her matronly self up, she said: 'It's Lady Ormond's style; she was never content until Mr. Basil had torn the old things out. It's like a sweet-box to my thinkin', and a bit bare. It needs people to set it off,' she criticised, unconsciously paying the proper artistic tribute to the style of the period the room represented—created to display and to serve as background for the First Empire elegance and simplicity.

Miss Carew only caught at the name. Lady Ormond! She had seen it often in the papers.

'You know her ladyship?—No,' Mrs. Henly took for granted. In a frame on whose mahogany border buzzed the Napoleonic bee in bronze was the photograph of a lady in ball-dress. Mrs. Henly lifted it. 'Lady Ormond at the last court ball.'

The girl's eyes were met by a pair of eyes handsome and mocking, hard and cold as her own were soft and sweet.

'A professional beauty,' Mrs. Henly ranked her. 'But,' and she connected her with the room as she glanced around Lady Ormond's creation—'it's a trifle cold.'

Miss Carew replaced the picture. The proud beauty, her cape of velvet and sable falling from one bare shoulder, seemed to reign over the room. Miss Carew no longer felt the warmth of its greeting. It had assumed a personality in which she had no part. The personages had come to people it—it suffocated her, and she walked mechanically over to the window and stood there, looking out on the dreary aspect of bare trees, the whirl of withered leaves along the garden paths, and the few last roses more wintry and melancholy in their desolation than the spectre leaves that had already passed through death.

She said hesitatingly: 'Since Mr. Tempest has telegraphed, I suppose it will be best for me to wait a little.'

But Mrs. Henly interrupted her. 'Wait? Why, Mr. Basil wouldn't hear of your not waiting, miss. He'd think I had not made you comfortable. What can I get you?' She lingered.

Perhaps Miss Carew understood something of the woman's interest in herself—her natural curiosity; perhaps Lady Ormond in her frame, the boldness of her sway at Craven, made the American say, lifting to the placid English face her clear dark eyes: 'I'm here for the first time in England; I came from my country expressly to write a study of Mr. Tempest for America.'

The old housekeeper smiled. 'A study of Mr. Basil!' she echoed. 'Why, my dear, I had him at ten years old for my own, as I might say, and I couldn't study him! It's like learning a new language every day. He's never the same.'

'It's his charm, Mrs. Henly.'

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'Oh, I dare say!' Mrs. Henly was doubtful, there being moods she had reason to remember as not possessing that characteristic. 'But he'll not tell you anything, miss! He won't be written! I've seen them who would study him, as you call it, come and—go, chiefly. No one ever stayed as you have.' She paused. 'You're a writer too, then?'

Miss Carew smiled. 'I am afraid so.'

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'Oh dear!' exclaimed the housekeeper, reprovingly at the lack of professional enthusiasm. 'Mr. Basil loves his writin'! He was no more than six years old when I remember him coming to my room with a little piece of wood. I was underhousekeeper then, and quite a young woman. "Henly," he said, "sharpen this into a pencil, and I'll write you a birthday story." And time and again I can see him in the big chair by the fire in the housekeeper's room, with the maids and me around him, "makin' stories," his eyes big as saucers, his cheeks like roses.'

Mrs. Henly had not chattered about Lady Ormond, and she was not conscious of chattering now. 'Lady Tempest died at his birth, and for all the bringing up he's had, poor dear . . . One night, miss, I was in this very room (it was his mother's morning-room, and when the family were away I used to come in and dust the things myself), and a fly had driven up without my hearing it, for it was winter-time and snow on the ground; and this door'—she pointed to it—'was pushed open, and Parsons (the old white-headed butler, you may have remarked, miss) came holding a little lad by the hand. I'd not seen Mr. Basil for nearly five years. He stood there in his little greatcoat and fur cap, and says out, clear as

a bell: "Henny, father sent me back to Craven; there's a letter for you in my pocket somewheres." He was not much over ten years old.

'Just take this yellow stuff off the wall,' commanded Mrs. Henly with imagination, 'and put on a blue paper and curtains to the window to match, and give me back my plain furnishings, and you have the dear old room, Miss, as he stood in it. I have thought sometimes he always connected his lonely coming with it, and was glad to change it. I says to him, "They haven't ever sent you alone, Mr. Basil?" I couldn't believe my eyes—all the way from Paris like a lost foundling,' she paradoxed.

"Why not?" he answered me, as old as old. "If I'm to live alone, I expect I can travel alone as well."

'Sir Geoffrey had married a Frenchwoman, and she took a dislike to the child.'

'You call him Mr. Tempest,' the guest said.

'There's Sir Cyril, his brother—he's nine years older. How I've gone on!'

'Oh!' exclaimed Miss Carew, 'not too much, if you can talk to me. I'm more than touched by it. You've been a mother to him, or near it.'

'All he had, poor lamb, from then till he went to Oxford; and then he made his friends. We had masters here for him. Sir Geoffrey wrote me month by month how to do for him, and I had but to follow. If you could get him to talk of it all—there's a study! I sometimes wonder. His thoughts and feelings must have been strange enough some of those days.' In Miss Carew's sympathetic silence she went on: 'I've been glad he wasn't my own, if you will believe me, many times, for such as he was

to me he has made my heart ache, and I suppose flesh and blood can ache deeper still for its own.'

It was a singular ending. Miss Carew felt it so. Was he ungrateful—or base?

'I get quite savage here,' Mrs. Henly apologised. 'I never talk—I live in the past.'

'You should write the study, Mrs. Henly,' said her listener. 'There's no one so well fitted. Alfred de Musset's nurse wrote her souvenirs of her master.'

'Oh, me!' exclaimed the old woman: 'I can't write a letter any more, and I've forgotten how to talk. I'd like to see it written in another way, miss—in his children and on his wife's face. There!' she exclaimed, 'is the motor-car; it puffs like a porpoise, doesn't it?' and she hurried out to meet Mr. Tempest.

When Tempest came in, the guest started—he had so grown! Her eyes were full of the little image Mrs. Henly had conjured up for her.

Tempest, utterly fagged, in travelling dress, his hat and gloves in his hand, came forward with eagerness; his face lighted as he put out his hand. 'How enormously kind—how friendly of you to wait! I stopped at the Ramsdills' in real dread for fear you had gone off somewhere, do you know? And to find you here waiting for me!...'

He did not remove his eyes from her; the intensity of his look, his taking in as it were of every line of her face, his possessive absorption of her, made her redden painfully, and her commonplace words of greeting stopped on her lips.

There seemed between them already an intimacy which had in her mind no excuse for being. She had a feeling of knowing him absolutely, as she

stood for the short space of a moment under his eager eyes. Furnished already with the little story of his boyhood, she had an advantage over him. Women understand men far better than men understand them; and she saw that, no matter what he had gone to London to do, he had been restless, and that he was glad to be back and to find her there. He went over to the window, and, unfastening it, stepped out and called back to her to follow him.

'There are just three roses here: I want you to gather them.' He held back the stems, that she might pluck close down and not hurt her hands with the thorns.

Miss Carew picked three tea-roses in full bloom, and came back to the morning-room with them in her hand.

'If I tell you I am not in a working mood you will desert me?' he asked.

'I came,' she said quietly, 'to read what I wrote out yesterday.'

She did not finish, 'otherwise I have no reason to remain,' but he felt it on her tongue, and hurried: 'You shall read—I mean if you will be so kind. The fire here is too good to leave. I'll fetch the manuscript, and we'll have tea here.'

'No tea for me, thanks, Mr. Tempest.'

'Why not?' He was at the door.

'I'm not hungry—I'd rather not. . . .'

'But I'd rather,' he said, laughing; 'you forget my long fast and ride.'

Another intimate little meal here alone with Mr. Tempest she felt she must not, did not wish to enjoy; but she had no choice. He returned in a

few moments with his sheets of manuscript, and tea followed.

Miss Carew made it this time, and served it from the most lovely china her hands had ever touched: eggshell cups with golden N's upon them. Tempest on the divan near watched her with the intentness that was growing bearable because she determined that it must be habit and not personal to herself.

'You like the china?' he asked. 'It goes with the room. What do you think of it? The room, I mean.'

'It seems to me,' she said bravely, 'that it is not Craven, since you ask me. It is foreign, as though it were a mood, a passing fancy. Of course it is perfection of its kind, and a perfect kind for certain parts of Paris; but here, charming as it is, I am not at home in it.'

Tempest ate his toast and drank his tea without remark, and she ventured to ask: 'Do you, yourself, like it?'

'I like it,' he said slowly, 'for what it has made me forget.' He believed his words to be enigmatical to her, and she, guilty at what she thought she knew and could read into them, took up the manuscript from the sofa at his side and without preamble began to read. At first her delivery was timid, with short breaks and a voice that came scarcely farther than her lips. But as the beauty of the work grew upon her it carried her out of herself.

Tempest listened, a shielding hand over his eyes. He remained as he was, without comment, until the silence grew painful. Her eyes, when he at length looked at her, were on the photograph of Lady Ormond, and he put his hand back, took the photograph and held it out to her.

'Lady Ormond. You find her, of course, lovely?'
'Very lovely.'

'No,' he contradicted, 'you do not mean what you say. You find the face too vain to be lovely, too cold to charm. You think it a shallow perfectness—for perfect it is. The old complaint—il y manque Pâme?'

His assertion was a question, although he evidently gave his own point of view, and she was obliged to reply, to say something in response.

'I don't know Lady Ormond.'

'Nevertheless you think all this? Answer me, please.'

'Then yes,' she said, rather defiantly, 'since you read another woman's character for me and analyse for me my unformed thoughts.'

Tempest smiled bitterly, and unfastened the velvet at the picture's back and took the pasteboard out. 'Since you feel so about her, isn't it unfair to keep her in evidence?' He leaned over and laid the photograph on the fire. The flames grew sombre under it and then glowed through it; the edges blackened and curled.

Tempest's action, unreserved as it was in the presence of a stranger, did not cause Miss Carew embarrassment. She was conscious of being an unregarded witness—he almost too utterly ignored her. She represented, so she believed, nothing personal; was more unremarked than the objects of the room, which were no doubt directly connected with their chooser. When the picture had altered to a mass of blackened tissue film, Tempest attentively came back to the picture that was as yet undestroyed—Miss Carew in the Empire chair, her

dark head against the yellow brocade, the firelight on her cheek, and in her hands holding the manuscript.

He held out his hand authoritatively. 'Now—the manuscript.'

She was about to give it him, when she caught herself. 'To do what with, Mr. Tempest?'

'To destroy.'

Miss Carew held it tightly; a slight red flushed her cheek, and anger stirred in her against the burned goddess. Was she such a fetich that this sacrifice must follow?

With tenacious jealousy she clung to the paper she held. 'You can't mean to burn this?'

'Yes; lay it on the flames, please.'

' No,' she said, quietly and as determinedly.

'Why not, Miss Carew?'

'Because it is too beautiful. . . . I have read it badly, but it is too beautiful to destroy.'

Grave and charming, she leaned forward in her Empire chair. He seemed amused—or, more correctly, delighted. His brows unknit, though he still held his hand out.

'Come, give it me.'

She smiled and shook her head.

Tempest leaned forward. 'I shall have to take it by force.'

She paled a little as he put his hands over hers that held the manuscript. With force gentle as it was strong he took both her hands for a moment, lifted them to him, half-way to his lips, then let them fall and said petulantly: 'Why didn't you say you liked it, then, before? You are my public, my audience, and you read without comment.'

She did not answer.

'I will spare you needless words of praise'; he smiled; 'but you have pleaded for it,—will you sponsor it?'

She had risen, and as if to put the manuscript out of harm's way laid on the mantel, where were her gloves and the roses together. 'You have not answered me, Miss Carew. Will you sponsor this new novel?'

'I think I don't understand you, Mr. Tempest.'

Tempest threw his head back; a little under his moustache she thought he bit his lip. He made a slight gesture of his hand as if he threw away something he held.

'No,' he said, 'of course you do not.'

The Napoleonic lamp, three straight bronze candlesticks under the vivid green shade, had been lighted, and the light fell on the girl's hands as she drew on her gloves. Tempest started with sudden eagerness as if to speak. Indeed, she waited in a state close to agitation. Then he caught himself up as a man who turns of a sudden in a roadway, along which he has been walking at a good swing. Tempest mentally turned on his heel.

'I mean,' he said quietly, 'that I have not written, as I told you, in six months; that, thanks to some lucky star, I am en veine once more. How long this will last I don't know. I may wake up to find myself an idiot to-morrow. To-night at least I could write on until daylight. If there is any merit at all in these pages you have written out for me, let it speak as strongly as it can.'

He stopped, looked at her, saw her interest, and went on. 'I mean to say there will be no more unless this mood continues without interruption.'

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Still she waited, her face bent a little, her eyes on the roses in her hands.

'That unless I can continue as I have begun, dictate to you as the inspiration comes, I shall fling the manuscript in the fire.'

Miss Carew heard with gratitude the rolling up of the motor-car: short as the distance was, it had been ordered to take her home. She stood bewildered. His nearness to her, his eyes upon her, overpowered her. She longed to escape, and with no apparent regard to what he so selfishly demanded she took a hurried leave of him.

Tempest, after Miss Carew had gone, walked to and fro in the yellow room; reflecting on her, his eyes still full of the feast of her he allowed himself so freely to make, and which she, with charming unconsciousness, permitted. She was unconscious; there was no doubt of that—otherwise she would not be able to meet his regard with the fine clear look that made him liken her eyes to wells of light. At the simile he put his hands over his own that burned and stung.

'If I could only steep them in those cool depths, bathe them there, kindle their torch, as my mind's torch has been relit! Henly,' he ordered, when the housekeeper appeared in answer to the bell he had wrung, 'I wish to dine here.'

'Yes, Mr. Basil,'—as she would have said it had he expressed the intention of dining on the Trafalgar Monument.

'And serve me yourself, will you? Put a few things on a tray, you know, and clear off a little table. Don't let a servant come near me.'

'No, Mr. Basil.' She looked furtively about the gay box of a room, as if in spite of her eyes, which had seen Miss Carew drive away, she fancied her encornered somewhere: there was a sense of intimacy and cosiness in the little room, where the fire had slowly devoured every ugly black ash of the discarded picture. The pungent odours of the roses, drawn out by the warmth, still hung on the air. 'The sweet box,' as Mrs. Henly dubbed it, seemed suddenly to have become very sweet indeed!

'You're fagged out with the long trip, sir. It's too much for a day, isn't it?'

'It's enough and to spare. I shall rest here. I want never to see London again.' He had said this before, and it did not dismay her.

She noiselessly and quickly cleared off a little stand, and put it before the divan where Tempest had thrown himself.

- 'You'll like early supper, sir?'
- 'Yes, when you choose.'

'Wouldn't you go and have your bath, and get freshened up, Mr. Basil? I've laid out your things.' In the good creature's eyes, that rested on Tempest with the respect and decorum demanded, any woman would have seen the mute caress that could never be expressed. As she passed behind him, close to him, one could fancy she laid her hand on his hair.

When an hour later Tempest returned to the asylum he had chosen in which to follow out a train of thought whose spell he did not wish broken, a brightened blaze, a bunch of pale violets in a vase beside a tempting little meal already spread, met his eye. Just the repast to please his fastidious palate, and stimulate without the full heavy sense of having as usual dined. A cold pheasant, a well-made salad, the cooled champagne; then Henly with an ice, and later

his coffee. She had with true unbending, as if to cater to his sight, even put on a little apron with bows at the bottom.

'Henly in an apron! What things I make you do!'
'Not half enough. I never see you these days, Mr.
Basil.'

He said gloomily, 'No, and you are better not.'

He lit a cigar from the box that she fetched, and she went away with the coffee-tray and left him to dream, to muse—to take after a little while from his pocket a packet he had brought downstairs with him -to unfold it, consider it with a certain tender scepticism. In the packet of letters were several photographs: Lady Ormond in riding dress, Lady Ormond in fancy dress. After looking once at each, he put them in the fire with the pile of letters, which he did not untie. Then he sat heaped in a corner of the sofa and brooded—brooded, watching the fire eat and consume protestations whose feebleness his great need had found sweet because forbidden—all the long link of association with dishonour for three years. He had never idealised her; a sparkling wit, a good humour and grace, had acted as a gentle counterirritant to his moods. She had never been indispensable, and when her refusal came he had been glad. Why? Only because a new interest had, like a fine ray from an unexpected beacon, cut across the lonely rugged promontory, and his ship was sailing along its path.

'Otherwise God knows how desolate it would have left me,' he said aloud, and with the word smiled a little and shivered. 'Not that I am not desolate enough as it is, but my new folly has smoothed the way for the exit of the old. That's about all.'

He sat brooding—brooding, until Henly, venturing, came softly in to ask if he wanted anything more.

- 'Henly!'
- 'Yes, Mr. Tempest.'
- 'Mr. Tempest!' he mocked. 'If I fetched you a stick to-day could you sharpen it into a pencil for me, do you think?'

She smiled tenderly. 'Ah, no better than in those days, I'm afraid, Mr. Basil.'

'Never mind. But if you knew how I've longed for and needed those pencils! Made for me by another—put in my hand, and even then the hand guided!'

'You've not been writin' . . . ?'

Whenever Henly omitted the name of her master, he might mentally have supplied 'my dear' to take its formal place and not been wrong.

- 'Writing! I haven't written for an eternity.'
 It will come, sir.'
- 'Ah! There's no comfort in that. Spring will come—at least there's a precedent in its favour; but meanwhile so will winter! What's to be done for the one who makes the pencils out of nothing for me, guides the hand and does more? What's to be done?'

Mrs. Henly, who never allowed herself to be non-plussed by her lord's singular queries, said warmly, 'Why, something very good indeed.'

- '... To some one who brings the spring out of season?'
 - 'If that could be, Mr. Basil,' she demurred.
- 'You are right,' he accepted, and sighed. 'We can't, of course. . . . But the wonder is there just the same.'

V

At the end of the week Mrs. Ramsdill's became a cherished asylum into which towards every evening Lucy Carew crept to dream, to re-live the strange enchantment that was filling her days. Her room, under the eaves of a cottage whose date was older than the history of her own country, charmed her with its latticed windows and straight curtains of redchecked print; the homely pieces of furniture; the square rag of carpet in the exact centre of the bare floor; the mirror in its old quaint frame, reflecting a patch of sky, a bit of meadow, and reflecting as well the vase of hot-house flowers that invariably stood on the low bureau. Old-world and foreign to her Western eyes, her surroundings grew to possess the attraction of those things which are near enough to fall under the shadow of a great interest.

She went daily to Craven. There had never been a word, since the night she left Tempest in the Empire room, regarding her appearance or his expecting her. She went: whether or not she knew it to be unconventional; whether or not she feared the criticism of Mrs. Ramsdill and Tempest's servants and was above it; whether or not she knew she had a sacred duty to fulfil to art, to posterity, in enabling the master to work (for work he did without even the tribute of a personal word for hours!); whether there was another reason for her going—the strongest, most cogent of reasons, against which no woman can reason without being aided by man's indifference!—at all events to Craven Lucy Carew went faithfully daily, walking the half-mile between Ramsdill's cottage and the castle.

This year there was no November dreariness, to chill her spirit or aid her to soberly consider what folly she was guilty of—what danger she ran. Some one drew upon the calendar of brilliant days with reckless extravagance. If it were Tempest, he saw that his scribe approached Craven in a shower of sunshine.

Her walk lay by way of a field and meadow path; a passage through a hedge by means of a little old stile, then she gained, with an abruptness that always seemed a sort of impertinence, the front of the castle.

Every morning Craven met her appreciative, beauty-loving eyes with fresh insistence. The perfect congruity of its *ensemble*, the correct ancient lines of Tudor architecture; the space and dignity; the harmony of dim, faded stone; the bigness of the mass, whose importance was visible the country round from hill to hill. Close to the house, like a shadow, was the blur of a pine growth, the red of beeches in the near encroaching density of the park, where she had once been with Tempest.

Park and wood—the elm avenue by which she came—the lie of the valleys, their edges softened and moulded by hedged farms and full-limbed oaks; the haze of atmosphere pink and gold in colour; the slow-rising smoke from little nestling cottages, and from the leaf fires on the green, all held by an eternal silence and peace that the old countries alone know, soothed her mind and spirit anew at each long look she gave. Everything on which her eyes rested suggested age and tradition—there was nothing new in the landscape, from farm and field, hedge, grove, and noble trees to the castle door. It spoke to her, all of it, with one voice. England met her here in a friendly way—in, one might say, a motherly way, making an

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appeal to some latent heritage in her blood, possibly—certainly finding repose in Lucy Carew.

These impressions and delights were of course, above all, the envelope, the subtle delicious surrounding to the reality of the man who was absorbing her. She at times rebelled at the mastery of the force that drew her so irresistibly, and wondered if some voice out of the New World would not speak and recall her. But, alas for Lucy Carew! there was no such voice to call.

She arrived at ten, to write in Mr. Tempest's study until a little after twelve. Then, with no invitation from him to remain to luncheon—and a sincere gratitude on her part that there was no question of it—she departed by the way she had come, reaching Ramsdill's for a meal of Spartan simplicity: as if by consent to an unspoken wish of hers, no bons mets were sent to her there any more.

He gave her no evidence of the pleasure he took in her presence, as with faithful accuracy and unfailing patience she bent over the pages that grew like snow piles at her side. But had there been another observer, he might have thought, as she bent unconsciously over her pages, that his eyes studied her: her lovely head, where under the dark mass of her hair a sort of firelight seemed to burn and redden the edges with bronze; her slender hand as it travelled over the pages; her leaning form; the pure outline of her grave, interested face—indeed, the observer might think that Tempest inspired himself from this youth and loveliness. When she lifted, as now and again she did in query, her eyes to him, he drank from them as from wells.

At Mrs. Ramsdill's during the long afternoon hours she tried to set her own mind in order, to ask herself

what she was doing. Towards what end? There was no one in the world to whom she was responsible; unfortunately free, her life was her own. But there was no reason therefore why she should create for herself an especial unhappiness or danger! Her idea of writing a sketch of Mr. Tempest appeared the very acme of folly. . . . She would sink down on her little bed in a state of nervous excitement, overstrained by the morning's effort, and bewildered at her own indifference to everything that was not Craven. But the very character of her reflections left her no time to dwell on the practical aspect of the case, or to tremble for an uncertain future. Tempest, live and absorbing, filled her thoughts. She had no need to control her attitude in her little attic room, and would throw herself on her bed, her dark head hidden in her arms, and thus re-live the day until her feelings terrified her, and, close to real unhappiness, she would rise, wander up and down her little room, and look out of the low window in the eaves to search the road to Craven. How long it seemed! and how it stretched away into her life as she looked, leading to an end she could not divine!

She usually ended by vigorously composing her mind, forcing herself to see the folly of her interest was no indication of any ultimate happiness. Her heart contracted at the very reasonable thought that she was in no likelihood in the thoughts of Mr. Tempest. An unknown American, a woman of taste and race different, emancipated, self-dependent—nothing more than an agreeable machine, an impersonal aid that ministered to some caprice of his, and he had not hesitated to employ her. This frank view hurt and harmed her, and before it could cure

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her—had it been able to do so—its falseness shook her control anew. She had at first known him for a frowning, threatening, discourteous gentleman. He now gave himself pains to charm her, or rather let himself charm her, as he could, and certainly bewitched and frightened her. To her live imagination he seemed to call her across the space that lay between them. As she took her leave of him his look claimed that she should return, and although he said never anything to bring her, was even forbidding in his good-byes, Lucy Carew fancied she could hear him at night calling her across the dark. And it gave her troubled dreams.

Tempest, each day after Miss Carew left, lunched in lonely splendour, smoked and meditated, rode or walked as if he had a goal to make before nightfall. He turned from the Ford to take the most out-of-the-way routes, for fear he might come upon Lucy Carew in some one of her lonely wanderings. She took them, he knew, but she could not have followed his Mad Anthony tramps.

One day before she began to write he said: 'I want you to lunch here to-day and go over to Penthuen with me. I can't write any more until I've been to the castle. It's an æsthetic tonic I take every now and then; and I know this weather—it's changing: this is the last fine day we'll have for ages. Let's squander it together. . . . Why do you hesitate?' he asked sharply, 'I want you to go.'

The day was clear and mild; along the hedges the holly reddened, and the warm dampness of the air bespoke rain. The windows of the brougham motor were open, and the golden air swam in upon them soft and sweet.

Miss Carew's dress was red, her coat tight-fitting,

buttoned up to her chin, and a toque of cloth from under whose furry edges the bright line of her hair ran like copper. She glowed in her corner of the car. The day's brilliance seemed held in her as in a fulcrum.

Penthuen stands in a park of oaks, through whose bare branches the grey and red of the towers burned and shone.

'It's Elizabethan,' Tempest said. They passed through the gates into a broad court between two porters' lodges, and rolled slowly along the avenue.

'It's not as beautiful as Craven.'

'Ah!' Tempest looked delighted. 'Do you really think that? I wouldn't have you feel otherwise, but I'm afraid you're only kind. Penthuen is more historic. On dit that Elizabeth had it built for an obscure favourite of hers. She made merry here as ever she made—poor vacillating woman—she was one of love's cowards. . . . There's no one here.'

He held out his hand to help her from the car. 'We have Penthuen to ourselves and with the past.'

The castle was a museum—its treasures famous in two continents.

At the door Tempest dispensed with the old servant who acted as guide, and who knew him to have the privilege of the house.

Miss Carew passed through the castle by his side, from room to room, an enchanted pilgrim down the avenues of history, from picture to picture, from Knight Templar to the Spanish Armada. Every now and then Tempest would turn from the object he was discussing and look at her; and after the first time, when she caught them in all their brilliance and passion, she never met his eyes again. At the end of

the great gallery, where the stained windows let floods of yellow and crimson light, he opened doors and led her out on to a balcony running round of the towers.

'Let me show you ——shire as nowhere else y will be able to see it.' As she leant with him of the railing and silently enjoyed it, he said to her, it tone whose vibrant feeling made her shake as if had struck the stone on which she leaned and it it trembled: 'Why do you keep your eyes from me?

His question and tone were so unexpected that could not for the soul of her speak—nor move. Steamed as she was, her face from him. After a secon in which she could hear her heart beat, he squietly: 'You are right to do so. Never look at or my like again.'

There was such depth of melancholy and despin his voice that she involuntarily lifted her head, see that he had started sharply and was look through the open door behind him into the pictigallery. Then he gave an exclamation, and she shim flush and start, turn, and take her by the arthrusting her a little around the balcony's curve of sight of the window.

'Stand there,' he commanded: 'don't move till come for you.' He had averted his face from h and bowed and lifted his hat and stepped half-w out of the balcony back into the room.

'Basil! What a fortunate encounter!'

'How do you do?' Tempest said coolly. 'Who are the rest of your party?'

'The rest of my party is one Frenchman! V have driven over from Galeswater, where we are at dismal house-party. I have left the Viscount at t porter's lodge, for when I heard that Mr. Tempest was doing the castle I decided I would rather see you than the treasure with my gentleman. So I told him that, par grand malheur, the castle was refused to-day—that Lady Penthuen was ill, and I should run in and try to see her.'

'How well you lie!'

'I have often lied well for you,' she said gravely.
'Let me come out and see the sunset,' and she pushed past him, and Tempest made no effort to retain her. Lady Ormond leaned, as Miss Carew had done, on the balcony rail, but she looked at Tempest fearlessly and not at the sunset.

'Basil, I have scarcely eaten or slept since I saw you.'

'You are foolish,' he said coldly; 'but perhaps you are in love.'

'Oh, you will say what you please, and I can't blame you. But you are cruel! How well you look! how handsome!—and how austere!' She put her hand on his arm. 'I don't believe one word of what you wrote me.'

'Hush!' he said furiously, 'I forbid you to speak of it.'

Lady Ormond said gently,—'Forgive me—only don't blame me too hardly.'

'I don't blame you.'

Leaning as she did toward him, her hands on his arm, she failed to draw from his face animation or interest—nothing save a cold regard, impatient and annoyed.

'You are not glad to see me?'

'No, Lady Ormond.'

'Ah!' she cried sharply, 'you are never polite: why

do I tempt your rudeness! It was a trap you set for me, Tempest; you tried me—I believe it now.'

'Lady Ormond,' he said, 'you must go to your guest. He will be impatient.'

Her eyes filled with angry tears.

'Come,' he said, more kindly, 'scenes are unlike you. What does all this avail?'

'Nothing,' she said, 'if you have ceased to care for me. 'You don't believe in me, Basil?'

He gave a shrug. 'There is no question of belief or disbelief. I had your answer—it was a natural one. 'I would not have had you make any other.'

'Not if you loved me?'

'If I loved you I would pray Heaven for you to do as you did.'

'I understand,' she said, narrowly reading him. 'There is another woman. I was a fool not to see it before.' He smiled, and it angered her beyond her control. 'I see it all—all!' she reiterated in a voice strained between tears and anger. 'You put before me an alternative no woman could accept—you wished to be free of me. Basil, you have played a wretched game.'

He bowed. 'You will think what you like: the principal thing is—you are free.'

He had led her out of the fatal balcony and into the long hall, where he breathed more easily now they were out of hearing. He could be temperate now.

'Letty,' he said, 'why do you do yourself such injustice? You make yourself out a termagant—you're really only a nice woman, you know.'

She said nothing. She had lost him, and must accept the fact, but it angered her beyond her grief.

She looked at him fixedly. 'What is her name?'
He hesitated, and then the idea pleasing him he smiled and said:

'Just what a man in my place would choose it should be—a Latin name . . . you can follow it out for yourself. It means—"Light."'

'If what you told me is true' His expression stopped the words on her lips. She bade him goodbye without giving him her hand, and hastily left the gallery.

Tempest did not retrace his steps quickly but went back as slowly as he could, at a loss what to say or do —irritated, discomfited, and somewhat amused. As he stepped out on the balcony and made the turn, expecting to see the flash of the red dress and to encounter with his own Miss Carew's embarrassment, he started—she was gone!

Tempest actually looked over the parapet before he saw that there was an open window leading to another apartment, and he went hastily into a library, which he found that he knew of old; in a high-backed chair in the deep embrasure of a window Miss Carew sat reading. The full glory of the sunset enwrapped her. Her face was perfectly colourless, but this he did not see, for the light reddened it. Her hands were trembling, but this he did not see, for they were beneath the book she held. She appeared to sit there in peace and to lift to him a serene, untroubled face. He could have fallen at her feet.

VI

Tempest tortured himself with wondering whether or not Miss Carew had heard, and how much: if she had heard, would it affect her, and why? That it would not be indifferent to her he was too well versed in women not to mark, and he read with delight all that this clear-eyed girl revealed.

'If I could have a right to her, should I be so quick to understand her? Probably not! It is simply because she is so safe from me that I am tortured by a sight of bliss I can never claim. If things had been so that we might have married, I dare say I should have eaten my heart out with doubt regarding her state of mind!'

During the drive from Penthuen to Craven, over miles swiftly and easily covered by the heavy rolling motor, Tempest had not been able very satisfactorily to study his companion. Excitement may have blurred his vision; he several times impatiently passed his hand across his eyes, straining to see what change had come to her face. Once he muttered something under his breath which she could not hear—it sounded like an imprecation.

With all his power of making himself delightful, he filled the short hour so perfectly as to leave Miss Carew no time in which to think and puzzle and to withdraw from him. He made her conscious of herself and of him, and crowded out every possible other person from her mind.

On leaving her at Ramsdill's he said nothing whatsoever about seeing her the following day, and before it dawned he had regretted it. During the early hours he was up at dawn pacing his bedroom; later tramping his study, his face toward the window through which he could catch the first glimpse of Miss Carew when she should appear, he searched the avenue with the eagerness of one who waits for a herald.

Over and over again he murmured, 'Well, she has gone! She should have gone long ago. I am quite mad; and have I dared to dream . . . ? Letty did a good turn to the child.'

He gathered together the manuscript she had copied in a pile, on the top a sonnet he had written during the last few days. It was half-past ten, a good thirty minutes beyond her hour.

'I'll give her another hour to wonder in—to be jealous in, and to make up her mind to be late in, then if she fails me, I will scatter these sheets to the wind.
...' He steadfastly watched the unloveliness of the changed November atmosphere.

He had been right in his prediction: the phenomenal beauty of the autumn was gone, and England had settled down into the early winter gloom. In another five minutes Tempest saw her coming up the drive to the terrace steps.

She found him standing by what he called a sacrificial pile of all their work, one hand on it, one stretched out to her, and a radiant welcome on his face.

'I should have waited just one hour more,' he said, 'and then have destroyed this stuff, Miss Carew.'

Between them there was already the embarrassment of intense personal feeling undeclared. His delight at her return was too much for her composure: she turned away with the excuse of taking off her coat and gloves, and to-day she laid aside her hat. For the first time he saw her hair free of covering; it gave him the pleasure of thinking her at home in his room.

When he said brusquely, 'I don't want to write to-day, Miss Carew,' she flushed painfully.

'No? You did not perhaps expect me?'

'I never dare to expect you—I have never dared. If hope is expectation, then I did so. I can't say I didn't look; I was at the window—you saw me?'

'Yes.'

'Why do you gather up your gloves again?'

'If you don't care to work . . . ?'

'Oh!' his impatience was boyish. 'What a school-mistress! I have "worked," as you call it, made you work, for weeks—a methodical honest labour quite unusual even to me—and yet I have produced pas mal de choses. Can't I have one holiday?'

'We had yesterday.'

'We,' he laughed, delighted. 'We,' he emphasised, 'will have this morning. Let me rest in the agreeable sense of . . . talking with you—an hour or two, Miss Carew.' Other words were at his tongue whose warmth coloured even the simple phrase he used.

Miss Carew sat down before her table and her materials, and folded her hands over them.

'I have asked you nothing, Miss Carew, during these faithful weeks . . . I mean about yourself. You must have sometimes thought me selfish?'

'No.'

'I am,' he confessed, 'horribly selfish; but that is not the reason. . . . I have not wished to know. You came to me like a dream, as it might be: like a fairy godmother out of an old tale on one windy night in the storm—against my will. How rude I was! But you forgave me.' He had drawn near to her. . . . 'I

like to think of you so—you seemed to have a wand with you, you know: you touched the bewitched fancies in my brain, and things came to life again.'

Tempest was under a control whose strength only a man of his nearly ungovernable passions knows how to use.

'I have an idea there are no fairy stories in America; at any rate I don't connect you with anything three thousand miles away. You said something about careers and working for your living. . . .'

Here he stopped. Her slender hands, her slender figure, the grace and femininity of her coming, in contrast with the harsh facts he broached, appeared to distress him. 'I can't think of money or the lack of it in connection with you. I can't believe you are poor: you don't look it.'

'Don't think it, please, Mr. Tempest, nor about it. Let me write now—or go.'

The presence of Lucy Carew to-day was so grateful to him, her coming so far more than he had let himself hope—his relief that she had not heard the tirade at Penthuen—that he could not forgo the pleasure it was to move her: to see her eyes glow; to watch her fluttering lids; to mark the evidences of an agitation of which he knew the cause by reason of his own pulses. But he was determined to say nothing to alienate or terrify her, to force a retreat he knew she would do well to make—nothing that should spoil relations far too precious to him to renounce. . . .

'I like to think so of you—that you just appeared—got out of a pumpkin chariot at my door! You said something about America . . . but——'

He was struggling with himself. Since he must not

say to her what he wished, what he longed to say, anything else would be an insult.

She had taken up her pen, and he let her write for a time, dictating a few pages for re-copying, then threw them impatiently down.

'If you will let me, I will walk to the Ford with you. We must start now, or you will be very late for Mrs. Ramsdill's.'

At a little lane well on toward the village where he parted with her, he said: 'As long as you live you will never know what you have done for me, and I can't ever tell you—only won't you understand how, if that is the case, I can't endure the thought that you will ever have any hardships to bear?' His tone and the strange phrase chilled her. Did he mean this as a good-bye, a dismissal? She grew cold and pale.

They were quite by themselves in the little lane; Craven behind them and the Ford just at the turn. Tempest took her passive hands to him, and pressed them against his breast. Then, with the gesture she had remarked before, he threw them from him, and left her standing there, without another word, alone.

On his return to the house he went straight to Mrs. Henly's little housekeeping room—a cosy, comfortable, homely corner in a wing by itself—almost like a cottage set in the Castle's very midst.

Every object had a memory for him. No sentimental revolution had made an Empire room of Mrs. Henly's homely English quarters! Here she had lived a tranquil existence for over forty years, falling heir to the uses and duties of the place when she was a very young woman, at the first housekeeper's decease.

Tempest had associations even with the wall-paper's

blazing roses and knots of floating streamers, which his child's imagination had untied and retied to find there were no ends, no real continuations, and all the flowers and ribbons fell in confusion in his mind! The mantel clock, with its quaint Chinese figures, brought to Mrs. Henly by a sailor brother, had made the little Tempest dream of ships and those distant ports that possessed the maddening fascination of the far-away and the unknown. He had intended joining the nautical man's ship some day—just as he had intended doing at some period everything that amused him or stimulated his life's fancy. In the big chair, with its print-covered back and arms, Mrs. Henly had held him and soothed his griefs. His own little chair stood by the fireplace, as it had for more than thirty years. He had been a sailor in it; it had been a boat, a chariot, a ship of dreams. To this quaint room, with its individual odours—Tempest had always thought of wools and worsteds, and fire and fogs and tea-he had come stormily with his miseries of boylove, which he had confided on Mrs. Henly's breast; here stormily later, with the miseries of man's love. he had not confided. But never had he gone away without some solace from the homely little room. To-day he came in and shut the door. Mrs. Henly sat knitting in her big chair.

'She's old,' he thought for the first. 'She's aged very much of late,—but she'll stand by me till—the end.—Sit still, Henly; don't get up'; and Tempest took the corner of the table, and sat himself down on it staring at her.

He was past forty years old, but only she would have known it. There was no grey in the thick dark hair that grew close as a thatch around his beautiful head. Bodily and mentally he was so vibrant, so magnetic, so strong, that youth seemed inherent in him, and he would never be old. To her, indeed, he had never grown up. His naturally uncontrolled nature made him often like a naughty child, and when he was his more lovable self she called him to her heart 'my dear, dear boy.' As she said, she had wept tears already so bitter that she would not claim a nearer tie if it could have added salt to the brine.

Her master said shortly: 'Henly, she must go.'

Mrs. Henly knitted a row in order to collect herself, then put her work down on the table and looked at her master over her glasses. ('He speaks of her as if she were the housemaid,' she thought.)

- 'I'm heart sorry, Mr. Basil.'
- 'Why?' he demanded rudely: 'why?'
- 'She's a sweet and gentle lady, coming as she does, clinging to the door as I might say so: here as she is, day in and out, no one could, or does, think harm of her.'

He exclaimed furiously: 'Harm! how do you dare, Henly, to mean——?'

'I mean,' said the housekeeper steadily, 'that for a young lady alone here,—with no mother or friend even,—even the Ford would talk. But she bears it in her face what she is—good and true.'

'Yes,' he interrupted, more reasonably, 'she does; and good she shall remain. That's why she must go. She must leave Cravenford: no good will come to her for staying on——'

'But,' interrupted the devoted woman, 'to you—Mr. Basil?'

Tempest was forced to smile. 'You would sacrifice anything to that, I think! You have kept silent and

patient, never considering her so far, or her reputation, because you thought it was good for me!'

'Oh, sir,' she palliated, 'I thought no wrong, sir—for her or you.'

'Well, well,' he waived, and said significantly: 'For me there's no good in the world.'

The old woman's hands were clasped over her knitting-work, her wedding-ring fine and yellow on her finger—he had seen the ring grow thin with the years. His eyes were on it.

'But there are good things, sir,' she whispered softly: 'a wife and children.'

He laughed not pleasantly. 'You must renounce your fairy tales. The only ones that are left are gruesome—tales with which to frighten children.'

He frowned, and covered his face with his hand: a fine hand, strong and slender, nothing effeminate about it, albeit with the oval nails and psychic finger-tips of the poet.

He recovered himself. 'To return to what I came to say—Miss Carew must leave Craven.'

'Yes, Mr. Tempest.'

'I shall never send her, I shall never show her, let her dream I wish it . . . because,' his eyes flashed at the old anxious face, 'I wish nothing less—nothing less in the world—do you hear?'

'Yes, Mr. Basil.'

'She must not come to-morrow—nor again.'

As he threw back his head the shadows on his face appeared to creep from his melancholy eyes and brood over all his features. The spirits of the night and darkness had banded together to cast their baleful wings over him. 'She must not come again.'

'No. Mr. Basil.'

'I cannot bear it.'

She understood him and sat silent, her tenderness and pity fixed on his bowed, brooding figure. As her eyes met his he again covered his over with his toofrequent gesture, and exclaimed: 'Fire . . . coals of live flames heated red-hot and on each lid. What is this cursed malady that is destroying me? God! to be blind . . . blind . . . with the love of beauty so knit in me that it is one with my life! To give up all the images of the world, the forms of life, the colours that paint the aspect of the universe,—to go into this self, this dark gloomy prison of myself, with memories none too glad or brave or good, be sure! To live with the ghouls of the mind—the angels of light all banished. . . . Never to write again, never to create, because my selfish misery is too great; because I am sapped by revolt and not to be reconciled. Why, to-night I can scarcely see you, and there have been days when I would have torn my eyes open to see her more plainly! To potter around the earth I have been so vain as to think I trod well, to fumble for a chair, to fall instead of walking, to feel my way who have broken it through.

'You have watched the malady come to me, Henly, as you watched it come to my father—you have understood. You have seen me suffer, and I know you wondered at my control, when within I have shrieked with agony. . . .' He paused, then said significantly: 'But there is oblivion.'

In his anguish his eyes showed blood-red, as if horribly suffused with drops of a supreme Gethsemane. The old woman's face was sublime in tenderness; her tears were flowing freely.

'And I have thought for a moment of happiness,'

he breathed. 'I have dreamed of a love strong enough to go with me into that deadly darkness—the Inferno. But it's madness! madness!—I have proved it. It does not exist; and God knows I will protect myself from suffering any more deeply than now I do. But, as I said, there is oblivion. Look here.'

Tempest unfastened his cuff and rolled up his sleeve to his inner arm.

The old housekeeper gave a cry—the tears froze on her lids. She sprang to her feet and put her hand on his shoulder.

'Ah . . . no!' she cried, in a stifled voice: 'No-no, Mr. Basil!'

'Hush!' he commanded her sternly.

And she knew him too well to burst forth into the grief her heart contained. Tempest in his tone alone had become the master, who, although he had given his confidence, admitted no familiarity, however dear. The housekeeper trembled as she stood, and Tempest was the controlled one.

He said presently: 'You'll find some means to see Miss Carew, and to tell her whatever you like. You will prevent her coming. As for me'—he shrugged—'I am incapable of any further strength in the matter. I couldn't be expected to turn voluntarily from Heaven to Hades.' He smiled his peculiarly sweet, gentle smile, and rose to go.

Mrs. Henly followed him to the door. When he had left her, she fell upon her knees by the little chair he had used to sit in as a child, and wept for him and prayed for him, and determined that if there were hope on the earth to rescue him he should be rescued.

It did not call for an astute character-reader to remark the change in Mrs. Ramsdill's guest. The fine

country air of ——shire had failed to freshen or keep the original roses in her cheeks. Her walks to and from the castle did not stimulate her appetite. She was extremely altered, and the little woman tempted her with the best of her homely kitchen fare in vain.

Polly Ramsdill welcomed the unusual visit of Mr. Tempest's housekeeper with great deference and relief, and a burning curiosity to speak of the guest.

Mrs. Henly, in rigid black silk, with a dainty little close bonnet, whose purple strings were tied under her chin, had chosen to draw a veil down over her countenance, whose natural serenity was much disturbed. The veil was mottled a little, for even on the way from Craven she had cried through it.

'The young lady's hin-just hin from walkin'.'

Polly dusted a spotless chair and stood alongside of it hopefully—not venturing to suggest that Mrs. Henly should linger, but longing for it. 'She's never still'm; I do think she walks her flesh off her and her colour as well.'

'You think she is poorly, Polly?'

'Well'm,' coughed Mrs. Ramsdill, 'there's some as never does out of their natural air: if it were a vegetubble I'd say it were witherin'—if it were a child I'd say it were pinin'.'

Miss Carew would see Mrs. Henly, who went up at once to the room in the eaves.

The American was before the bit of a mirror that reflected sky and meadow and her own changed face. Like the Lady of Shalott, she had seen strange things pass in the little glass. She stood with her hat in her hand, for she had just come in. Her hair unconfined, seen for the first time by Mrs. Henly, wakened her admiration.

'What lovely hair, miss! and such a lot of it!'

Polly was right—the stranger's colour was gone: tired as she had been the day of her arrival at Craven, she had looked the picture of vigorous health.

'You're not looking as well as when you came to England, miss.'

Miss Carew was well—it seemed, perfectly; she thanked Mrs. Henly.

'But it's no wonder; you're feelin' the long close writin', I darasay.'

Mrs. Henly paused, surprised to find that for the first time she thought of the girl. She was young and vigorous; but what health and vitality, what strength of body and mind, and what divine patience, were needed for the task Mrs. Henly purposed for the slender creature! But she did not think twice of it. Love—that was all the strength needed, if she had it. If not?—ah, her poor, blighted boy!

She felt instinctive ease with Miss Carew, in whose presence she had found herself only a few times before. The nature of the stranger, although an unknown quantity, was sympathetic.

The old lady sat down beside Miss Carew on the little bed. She lifted her mottled veil, and revealed her disturbed face and tear-reddened eyes. She put out her hands before her in an old-fashioned little gesture of despair, gave a little choked sob, and murmured, whilst her eyes streamed over:

'Oh, miss, what a terribly cruel world it is indeed! what an odd cruel world!'

As this, to them both, was far too broad and humanitarian a cause for such sudden personal grief, she added, sobbing:

'Mr. Tempest-Mr. Basil-is very ill indeed.'

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Miss Carew's colour grew still whiter, and it was minute before she echoed: 'What has happened Mr. Tempest?'

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'Oh, nothing sudden.' Mrs. Henly got the bet of her tears. 'Nothing sudden, nor more than yest day—or that you would see; but he's ill, miss, a my heart is broken for him.'

Miss Carew said: 'I have seen that he is nerve and excited, but thought it was a relief to him work. I have been wrong, perhaps.'

'Oh no, indeed!' hurried the other. 'Far from you have been a blessing to him—a good, de blessing.'

Her way of putting it was sweet, and in its for soothed the heartache Miss Carew was beginning feel intensely.

Mrs. Henly was looking at her in a sort of appeand continued incoherently: 'The day I let you miss—I see now that I took it on myself, so to say I shan't forget how you stood there, wet and cold li a child lost in a storm: you was so eager, too, a your eyes was so bright, and you says so determined "I must see Mr. Tempest." Do you remember?'

How she had ever been that enterprising, practic bold invader Miss Carew was so far from being at to recall, that the story did not sound like her own her.

'... And I had just left him a half-hour beforeshut up in that drearsome room with his books which he wouldn't read or his papers which he swore would never touch again. Why, miss, you made not think somehow that night, as you came in, of the stories I used to tell him when he was a boy—fair tales—and you gave me the feelings of oddness, as

you just dropped in with the rain and was some kind of a bewitchment.' Her mingled figures were not unpicturesque, and the listener did not smile as she thought with a thrill of what Tempest had himseif said.

'... And I determined to send you to him, miss. I said, "Harm him it can't, and anything is better than to see him so." So while you were thanking me for being so kind to you, miss, I was thinkin' only of him, I'm afraid—what I shall always be doing to the last.'

Lucy Carew could not question her. She felt no wish to do so—she had a dread of what message the woman had come to bring her. She was speeding toward some point, and the girl sat patiently before the emotion and the love that struggled in the wrinkled old face; but as again Mrs. Henly's appealing eyes met hers she murmured: 'Do you regret it, Mrs. Henly—letting me in?'

'Regret it, my dear!' exclaimed the other. 'Ah! I don't know! If it's for always, I am heart-glad; if it's to make him grieve and suffer more, I shall never never forgive myself. . . . If there was only some heart that could care for him enough, some hand he would love that could guide him. But to see him . . .'

She wrung her hands, and heard Miss Carew say, in a voice that sounded hard because of the speaker's control: 'Don't, Mrs. Henly, tell me any more, please. I would rather not hear.'

The old woman ceased, wiped her eyes, and sighed.

- 'Does Mr. Tempest know you came to me, Mrs. Henly?'
 - 'Oh dear-he bade me come.'

^{&#}x27;He bade you come?'

- 'Yes, miss.'
- 'To do what?—to tell me what?'
- 'I can't ever tell you, miss.'

Miss Carew had taken her companion's hands; her breast heaved with surprise, and a sort of terror. 'You must tell me. Mr. Tempest sent you to me for what?'

- 'But you forbade me to speak, Miss Carew!'
- 'Of his illness—yes; but what does he wish me to do?'

Seeking to evade disloyalty, and nevertheless to accomplish her desired end, Mrs. Henley repeated: 'If there were only some one who cared for him, who could save him...' she whispered the words. She instinctively felt the pride in the woman beside her, whose clasp on her arm did not lessen. She did not venture a further plea on the part of one who should make the pleas for himself.

Miss Carew said very slowly, with effort, and in a voice so low that Mrs. Henly could hardly hear: 'If there were some one who would go through the world blind in his stead—suffer in his stead—bear all the burdens—near him (if she might be so blessed), and if not, then far away would bear them all the same—could such things be, even if he were never to know it!'

Mrs. Henly watched her, fascinated, a great hope dawning in her heart.

'Oh,' she said, 'I think he cares for the one too much to take her with him on his way, and so much that he would try to thrust her from him, and go on alone to spare her—and him loving her dearly all the while.'

The girl, with an impulsive gesture, threw her arms around the old woman's neck, hiding her face on the motherly bosom. Perhaps she cried softly there, tears whose source was not all pain, for her cheeks grew warm and red, and the strained white look had gone from her face when at length she lifted it.

'How good you are!' she whispered. 'What a mother you have made!'

'My poor boy!' sighed Mrs. Henly. She kissed the girl, pressed her hand, and found that her late flow of eloquence had deserted her—she had nothing more to say. She felt all of a sudden that further words of hers would be inappropriate. Once more she dried her eyes, drew down her veil and rose to go.

Miss Carew led her to the door, clinging to her arm. 'You have not yet told me your message,' she said, half smiling. 'I think Mr. Tempest bade you come to send me away?'

Mrs. Henly smiled faintly, and instead of answering, said impressively: 'He's all alone; and he don't know what I know, miss; and——'

Miss Carew caught her arm, blushed furiously, and commanded: 'Not one word to him, Mrs. Henly.'

- 'Oh! of course not, miss: how could you think
- 'Or I will be gone for ever from Craven—to-night—to-morrow.'
- 'Don't go, miss!' cried the housekeeper, in great distress. 'I give my sacred promise——'
- 'I trust you, dear,' said Miss Carew tenderly; 'but' (and she questioned with her eyes as well as with her words) 'are you quite sure, Mrs. Henly?'

The other's face saddened at once. 'Sadly sure, dearie.'

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'Ah! not that: I mean, about his caring so ... that he would spare her—at any cost?'

Mrs. Henly took the slender, cold hands between both hers: 'Quite sure,' she said.

When she was left alone, she found herself shut in with a new world—so full of bewilderment and confusion of sorrow, and dawning joy of doubt and love and despair, that she pressed her hands to her heart and prayed Heaven for strength to carry her through, and for wisdom as to what course to take.

She found herself stifled with the thoughts and doubts that rose.

It was not enough for her that a woman should come to seek her who with her own fond eyes read Tempest, and with the skill of selfish love draw from her a confession she never thought to make—even to the man she adored. She required more tangible evidence from him; and as if to corrode and harm the love that welled up for him, the day at Penthuen came forcibly to her mind: with just as much delight as she remembered her hours with Tempest, with just so much distaste did she recall Lady Ormond. She cried to herself: 'I must be sure indeed—very sure: he must want me very much indeed.'

After a sleepless night she let the following morning go by with no word or sign to Craven. When the last of the interminable hours had dragged themselves to their end Polly Ramsdill brought her a note from Mrs. Henly.

'You can't have gone, miss! You couldn't go, I am sure. Remember he is all alone.'

With her heart on the rack, her steps turned time and again Cravenward; and a spirit, if unworthy, certainly very feminine, pulling her back to reason and patient waiting for some sign to come to her from the Master of Craven-she let pass three dreadful days. They marked her life with suffering. At the third, on its early morning, she woke to hear a horse ride up-it was grey dawn, no more-hardly light, and her window was clear of shade or blind. Lying as she was, she could see in the little mirror the bit of sky, the meadow in the mists and the road; she saw too the rider, who came at a mad pace and drew rein -Tempest himself, his soft hat pulled well over his face. He spoke a second with Mrs. Ramsdill and left a package in her hands, and turning rode off as madly as ever knight could from a belle dame sans merci. The mists clouded the glass, and Lucy Carew was weeping when Mrs. Ramsdill came with the parcel for her. For a long time she held it unopened, not daring to break the envelope. She knew that whatever the contents might be, the rest of life would be for her henceforth as they should read.

Some dozen sheets of manuscript fell into her hands. She bent over the difficult handwriting—that of one who has written in his sleep, or who rises in the night to transcribe his thoughts in the dark. The uncertain aspect of the lines moved her with a great wave of tenderness, that carried her to him like a sea; and as she followed the wonderful words, she sat as one held in a spell—marvelling, confused, overwhelmed. One after another the famous sonnets to *Lucia* fell under her eyes. It was the conclusion of the old beautiful theme. The series was complete—the suite had reached at last its mature and mellow, its perfect conclusion.

The verses she beheld were immortal; they were

luminous in spite of the trembling transcription; they shone and burned on the pages in the girl's hands.

They were all for her—all to her. She rose unsteadily, with burning cheeks and eyes that glowed through the tears. She started as she was toward the door, with the fluttering papers in her hand, as though she would rush to him; then she caught sight of herself in the glass in her nightdress, her dishevelled hair.

She remained musing before the glass, the papers now held to her breast. 'A hand he could love to guide him,' Mrs. Henly had said. Guide him! He was her tyrant, her master! But he would be blind. At this thought, and all that the verses meant, written half in obscurity and yet so illumined—she realised through her love more perfectly the horrible destiny than the man himself had been able to do.

The glass reflected her serious and lovely face, and gradually the sun, for the only time during that long day, came out from behind the fog, as the sunrise sent one burst of brightness against the clear glass. It startled her—dazzled her, full as her eyes were of visions; and the glorious luminance hurt her with its cruel beauty.

'Oh, light for you—light for you, Basil!' she breathed. 'If I could make myself into eyes and vision and sight to be transformed into you and so be for ever lost——!'

Gradually the brief sunlight passed, and the melancholy aspect of the cloudy day definitely filled the room, and the glass ceased to be enchanted.

But the modern Lady of Shalott mused: 'I saw him ride across it, and it did not crack from side to side,—how can there be a curse upon us?' And she

turned away to dress in the old plain dress she wore when she first braved the doors of Craven.

VII

Miss Carew habitually came to Craven across the front lawns and terraces. But this day she changed her routine. She reached the park by way of the main road, as she had done on the stormy night several weeks before, when she sought Craven for the first time, and so boldly demanded interview with its master.

As she followed the avenue in the cold morning, she walked through mist. It cleared only to let her figure cut the vapour, which directly closed behind her again into one of the fogs in which winter England is mysteriously veiled; before her the shapes of trees indistinctly designed themselves like seaweed in a muggy sea.

A little more than three-quarters of the way up the drive she heard the trot of a horse's feet, and before she could step aside to permit, as she supposed, some groom from Craven to pass her, an equine head and body loomed so close that she gave a cry, and the horse was suddenly drawn back until he almost reared.

The hand on the rein was a woman's, the rider a woman—her tri-cornered hat and coat, and lips and cheeks all scarlet. She exclaimed, half-frightened, half-annoyed: 'Heavens! I might have hurt you!...' and stared down at the roadside encumbrance, and at sight of Miss Carew nodded a sort of good-morning: an expression of quick curiosity shot across her hand-

some, mocking face, '. . . hurt you, or been thrown myself. You're not startled?'

The rider held her horse quiet in the fog, and mercilessly scrutinised the young woman, who, dark and slender, of a loveliness no less marked than her own—of a grace no less seductive than her ladyship's—appeared to have miraculously unfolded into existence in the elm avenue, and to have taken form out of fog and mists. She presented a problem, suggested manifold possibilities, and at least commanded attention.

Without excuse or preamble, 'You're walking up to Craven Castle?' the rider asked her.

'Ves.'

'You're nearly there; however—but perhaps you know the way?'

'I think I shall find it.'

The pedestrian's dress was excessively plain. In her hands she carried a little packet which looked like a notebook. She had doubtless a Baedeker up her sleeve.

'You're an American?'

A slight smile touched the grave features of the younger woman. 'How did you know?'

The other laughed frankly. 'The same language—so different in transatlantic mouths. . . . I mean to say, you speak American. Craven isn't open to visitors, like Penthuen and the neighbouring castles,'

'No?'

'It's shut and barred, I might say. You won't get in. But I expect you are a hero-worshipper, and are going to try for a glimpse of the great writer? Your country-people are hero-worshippers?'

^{&#}x27;I think we are.'

The lady's horse stretched his long shining neck. The smoke from his nostrils blended with the mist, and stirred the vapour that flew away before his breath. It flew, too, around the head and form of the American girl, and of the trim red figure of the little equestrienne, to whom the monosyllables of the stranger were baffling, and because of her rival beauty annoying.

She gathered up her slackened reins. 'I've been following the hounds,' she vouchsafed, 'and I've cut through Craven by mistake; in a few minutes I shall hear the horn.' She leaned on her pummel, her mind travelling back to her last interview with Mr. Tempest at Penthuen; then suddenly she exclaimed, with a sharp 'Ah!' of enlightenment, and as though she did not relish the discovery, 'Why, I've seen you before!'

Miss Carew, who knew her as well as if she had seen her daily for years, said, 'I think, never.'

'But yes—a day or two ago; you wore a red dress; you were driving with Mr. Tempest in a motor; I was driving behind you to Penthuen.'

Miss Carew wore now cheeks that rivalled any red in her wardrobe.

'Ah, yes!' nodded her ladyship, with a sort of satisfaction that had no ring of pleasure in it.

They stood looking at each other through the mist that flew about their charming forms in little gusts of broken clouds—the dampness softening their tint and crisping the ends of Lucy's hair.

'You will find the castle open, I dare say.' Lady Ormond gave a cool laugh. 'I did not! and yet I am an habitule!'

She was angry. Every one palled on her since she had lost Basil Tempest; and this morning she had

burned her ships, and ridden to his very doors—to learn that he was ill, and saw no one: no one—but this girl, of course, who so calmly and charmingly went to him, with the simplicity of a dairymaid and the good looks of ten years' youthful vantage over Lady Ormond!

'Ask Mr. Tempest to show you the Empire room—it's a bijou,' she said maliciously.

The American's dignity impressed itself upon the Englishwoman by her silence, her maidenliness by her mounting colour. With angry yet unashamed eyes shot with a keen penetration, she said: 'Tell me—your name is Lucy?'

'Why do you ask?'

Lady Ormond shrugged. 'I am Lady Ormond,' she said, as if to complete the introduction, 'a very old friend of Mr. Tempest's; and he has spoken to me of you.'

The words did their work. Lady Ormond saw that the blow she dealt told.

'Good-bye,' she nodded maliciously; 'there's the horn,' and so it was, faint and far away. She touched her horse and rode into the mist, leaving Lucy Carew trembling like a leaf—for the first time in her relations with Tempest and Craven humiliated and ashamed.

She went on mechanically, conscious of having been dealt a poignant wound.

He had spoken to this woman of her—called her name to her!... Oh, what had she been doing! how mad and fatuous and foolish she had been! She would have turned then and fled, if the fog had not lifted, as it does, absolutely for a second, and the great mass of Craven rose before her. She shuddered at it for the first time—a momentary distaste, a sickening

jealousy, displaced all the feelings of the past hours. The prints of Lady Ormond's horse's feet were on the damp earth up to the very terrace steps: as for herself she was—pis-aller—a second-best. No, she could not bear it, . . . it was too humiliating! Even part of the house bore her stamp. Tempest had displaced the tender memories of his youth to humour the caprice of this woman. What part did Lady Ormond now play in his life?

The castle was silent. Before her gleamed the large door, its highly polished surface blurred here and there by the mist that lay in little pearly lines along the carving. Lady Ormond's hand had first touched the knocker, or else the great door had just opened to let her go victoriously forth.

Her own behaviour appeared to her now in its rash unconventionality. She saw the situation as it should have declared itself before, and she despised herself. What was she doing here? The thought of Tempest came to her with so much anguish—so keen was her knowledge of how much she loved him—that she bit her lips, felt her cheeks burn with shame, and sharply she turned to leave Craven for ever.

Here the rustle of leaves in the terrace close at hand made her conscious of the indignity of a flight, in the sight possibly of some servant to whom she was already too familiar; and as she looked for some other refuge, the long window of the Empire room caught her attention. At sight of the room the last words of Lady Ormond came to her ears. She would go in—if it were open—leave the sonnets there on the table, and then slip away. A turn of the window-knob and it yielded, and Miss Carew opened the door and stepped quickly and silently in.

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At first she thought she had mistaken the room among the many windows, as she looked hurriedly around for the bright dazzling welcome of yellow colour. She seemed to have been transported back to a period which, although far nearer her own time in reality, had an air more ancient than the court days of France. She was standing in the centre of an old faded octagon room, its walls hung in shining chintz, its furniture covered with the same material, the pale colour of the background softening the gay blue of the flowers and the plumage of the miraculous birds. On a mahogany table was a brass lamp under a shade with silken fringe; a work-table, open, held wools and tapestries: there was a tapestry frame by its side, and a low-seated Chippendale chair. Lucy caught her breath, and almost held it lest she should breathe against a spell-against an image on a glass. Across the brass fire-dogs lay the red embers of a half-burned-out fire. The room was fragrant with the scent of old-time things of the past, to which the wide-open flowers of the roses in the bowl by the lamp lent their fresh odour of a day. Nothing in the world could have spoken to the aching heart of Lucy Carew as this changed room, altered in her absence by the lonely man who tried to win back to him his past, and to efface from between himself and the woman he now honourably loved memories that might do her wrong.

The sonnets were in her hand: could she leave them here, and go now?—leave him a prey to a future she did not dare to picture for any human creature, still less for Tempest, whom she loved?

With the transformation around her, the influence of the old-fashioned room, Lady Ormond's impression

ceased to dominate. When in another minute she heard Tempest's step in the hall and his voice, she waited for him breathless, with a beating heart in which there was but one feeling. He opened the door and slowly came in. As he did not speak, and his eyes were on her, she spoke quickly: 'Mr. Tempest . . ."

He gave a cry, and started forward. 'Stand still,' he said eagerly. 'Don't move. I hear you—let me feel my way to you.'

Her heart seemed to stop beating.

'Speak again.'

'Mr. Tempest.'

As he touched her hand, then her arm, his grasp folded on it, and he held her in a grip of iron and looked down into her face. 'Is the room pitch dark?'

'No,' she replied, steadying her voice. 'It is a gloomy day—but not quite dark.'

'Not quite dark,' he repeated: 'no—for I can see you still! Come to the window please.' He drew her there, and turned her face with both hands up to what light there was. His close bending to her, the intensity of his face, its passion and suffering, over which love rode like a king, transfixed the girl, who lifted her own swimming eyes and trembling lips in compassion, looking at him in turn as if she would aid his sight—of her own free will stamp her features on his failing vision.

'That lovely hair,' he softly said, and touched it: 'it has light all along it like sun in the reeds, on the leaves; it can hold the light so, dearest,—why can't my eyes? Those lovely eyes—sometimes I think they are wells where the light is all held—unexhausted

depths—I would drain them dry. Those lovely lip—I have no likeness for them. I only know mir long for them. I have looked at you often enoug God knows, and yet to-day I feel I have never set you before. Because I am losing you. . . . I sha soon have only remembrance to feed upon.

'Lose me? Oh, why?' she whispered; and unabto control her emotion hid her face on his breast.

'Don't cry so,' he said, holding her: 'don't, Lucy After a few minutes, in which he soothed he tenderly, she mastered herself, and withdrawing little, laid her cool palms against his eyelids: 'Yo

'My God!' he said passionately, 'why have I be tempted like this? Why, it's a crime to take yo Lucy darling.'

'You don't love me,' she said simply, 'or you woulnot think it; you don't want me, or you couldn't fe it.'

'Want you!' he laughed. 'Haven't I proved it Must I kiss you again and crush you, as I could to prove how one you are with me? Don't yo know...'

She blushed crimson.

'I am a wreck-a crippled creature.'

need never lose me unless you wish.'

'Hush!' she pleaded. 'I only want to be sure one thing. Do you—love me?'

Tempest kissed her. 'I don't think that's the word!'

'Ah!' she said softly, 'it's a good one—and enoug to keep me with!'

She drew the hand she held against her heart.

'You don't realise, my darling,' he said, 'that I a going blind. I shall be as blind as sleep.'

With great sweetness she asked: 'Would it be any dream you love to find me always in that sleep?'

He answered her without words, touched by the delicacy of her thought.

Against the arm she leaned upon were the marks of the temptation to which he had yielded in moments of supreme suffering. Should he tell her? The habit, begun before she came to him, had been ever since her advent entirely under control. It could never tempt him now again. Why should he tell her—cause her added grief—since he could not, would not, let her go? She must share his lot; it was her fate.

But he said: 'You will save me, Lucy?'

'I will love you, Basil.'

'You will save me so.'

As he held her—so tenacious is the woman of her points, that, as Lady Ormond's brilliant figure flashed across Lucy Carew's mind, she whispered her name.

'And I shall fear every woman now,' she confessed. Tempest laughed.

'You need not. I have loved you all my life—you in other women, and now all women in you.'

'This sweet, dear room, Basil!'

'Ah, you like it now? I couldn't think of anything else to do in those horrible days when you kept me waiting, so I transformed it. I have dreamed of seeing you here—in a dozen different pictures—but never of finding you like this.'

She told him how she had come, and of her meeting with Lady Ormond. 'I was jealous of her—even that night here.'

'I knew it,' he laughed.

'Oh,' she exclaimed, chagrined, 'how did you?'

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'I hoped it, at all events; and that's why I burned her picture before you—so that she at least should not be between us.'

She asked timidly, 'You cared—then—for me?'

'Then? I cared the night you came in your little wet shoes: I could have kept you then—with no further words, no parting, and never let you go. I love like that,' he said.

She drew a little from him. 'How well you know how you love, Basil!'

He held her by force—drawing her until her lips were on his: 'Yes,' he murmured, 'how well I know!'

It was past the luncheon-hour when Mrs. Henly, who had wandered the house over for her master, gently opened the morning-room door. At first she distinguished nothing in the sombre room, where across the window the mists from without blew a grey filmy curtain.

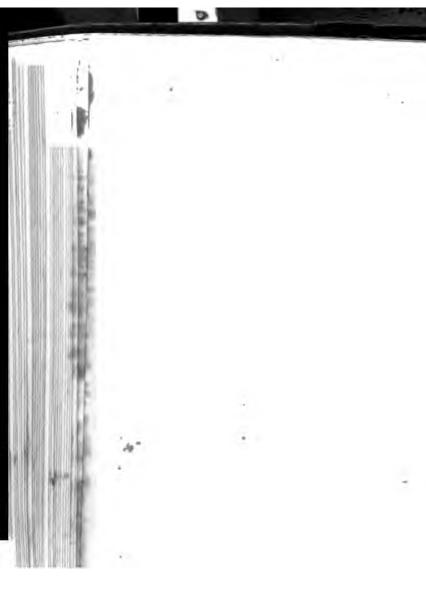
Then—she saw her Tempest standing with a slender dark lady by his side. They were talking earnestly, and did not hear her come in. She waited a minute in the shadow of the door, her loving eyes on his transfigured face.

The dear old room had taken its aforetime form once more.

'Give me back my blue chintz walls and my old-fashioned furniture,' she had said to Miss Carew; and back again they were, as though the fairy wand the girl had brought had touched them. Tempest, thus surrounded, seemed to have found his youth again: his face, as she could see it bending to the woman's before him, was radiant. He was smiling, and in the picture that he made to the eyes of the old creature

who had mothered him, she forgot the blight and malady, and only saw the wonder of the love that should be eyes and light for Basil Tempest, and holding him divinely by the hand should lead him softly all his days.

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